THROUGH THE AIR TO ALASKA

Ted Scott
Flying Stories

FRANKLIN W. DIXON

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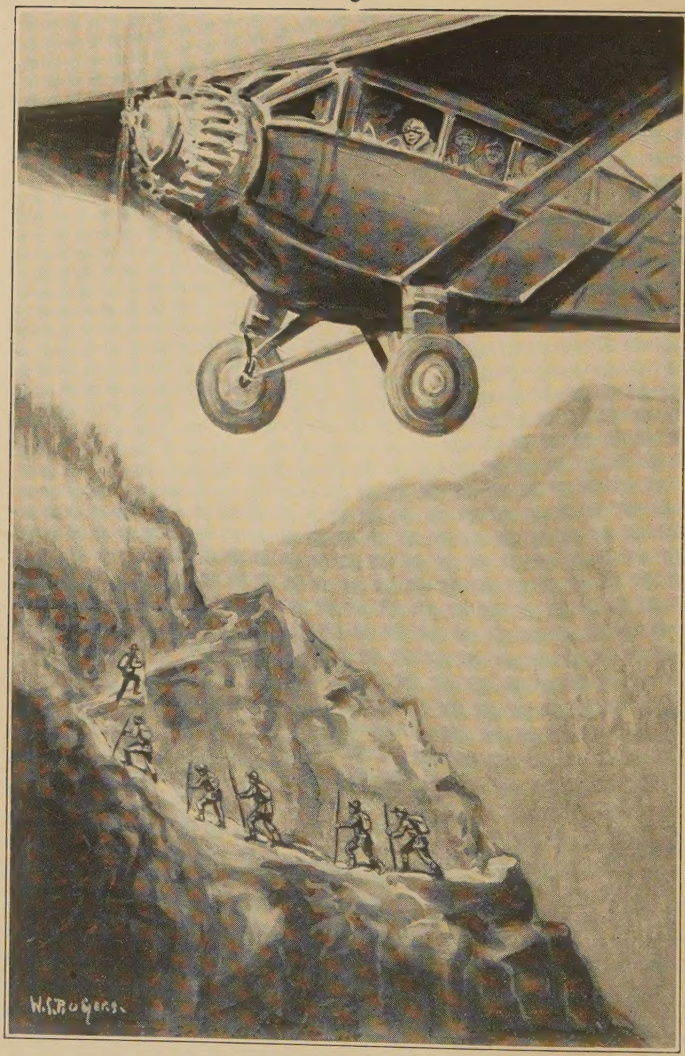

THE AVIATORS SAW SIX MEN TOILING UP A HILLSIDE.
Ted Scott : Through the Air to Alaska. *Frontispiece* (*Page* 176)

THE TED SCOTT FLYING STORIES

THROUGH THE AIR TO ALASKA

OR

TED SCOTT'S SEARCH IN NUGGET VALLEY

By

FRANKLIN W. DIXON

AUTHOR OF

"OVER THE OCEAN TO PARIS,"
"LOST AT THE SOUTH POLE,"
"THE HARDY BOYS: HUNTING FOR HIDDEN GOLD," ETC.

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BOOKS FOR BOYS

By FRANKLIN W. DIXON

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THE TED SCOTT FLYING STORIES

OVER THE OCEAN TO PARIS
RESCUED IN THE CLOUDS
OVER THE ROCKIES WITH THE AIR MAIL
FIRST STOP HONOLULU
THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST FLYERS
SOUTH OF THE RIO GRANDE
ACROSS THE PACIFIC
THE LONE EAGLE OF THE BORDER
FLYING AGAINST TIME
OVER THE JUNGLE TRAILS
LOST AT THE SOUTH POLE
THROUGH THE AIR TO ALASKA

THE HARDY BOYS MYSTERY STORIES

THE TOWER TREASURE
THE HOUSE ON THE CLIFF
THE SECRET OF THE OLD MILL
THE MISSING CHUMS
HUNTING FOR HIDDEN GOLD
THE SHORE ROAD MYSTERY
THE SECRET OF THE CAVES
THE MYSTERY OF CABIN ISLAND
THE GREAT AIRPORT MYSTERY

(Other volumes in preparation)

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Through the Air to Alaska

Made in the United States of America

TO THE HEROES OF THE AIR

WILBUR WRIGHT—ORVILLE WRIGHT
The first men to fly in a heavier-than-air machine

LOUIS BLERIOT
The first to fly the English Channel

CAPTAIN JOHN ALCOCK
The first to fly from Newfoundland to Ireland

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CAPTAIN GEORGE H. WILKINS—CARL B. EIELSON
First to fly over the Polar Sea from Alaska to Spitzbergen,

And a host of other gallant airmen of the Past and Present who, by their daring exploits, have made aviation the wonderful achievement it is to-day

THIS SERIES OF BOOKS
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

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THROUGH THE AIR TO ALASKA

CHAPTER I

The Falling Bomb

"A dangerous bit of work, Ted."

"I know it, Walter," replied Ted Scott, the famous young aviator who had been the first to fly over the Atlantic Ocean. "But apart from my duty as a citizen, I have a special interest in helping protect the State Prison at Janvier."

"You mean because the Gales are there?" queried Walter Hapworth.

"Exactly," agreed Ted. "Those fellows are the bitterest enemies I have in the world. Their crimes have put them behind the bars, and that's where they belong. They're as dangerous as rattlesnakes."

"They sure are," acquiesced Walter Hapworth. "And there's nothing more certain than that if they broke jail their first thought would be to get even with you for bringing them to justice."

"As for myself, I wouldn't much care," replied Ted Scott. "I've always been able to spike their guns when I've come up against them. But they'd try to strike at me through injuring my folks, as they've done before. And that's something I have to guard against."

"Just how serious is this prison riot, anyway?" asked Walter Hapworth. "I haven't yet had a chance to read the morning papers."

"It's mighty serious," replied Ted gravely. "At last reports, the convicts seem to have won control of the prison. The mutiny seems to have come as a complete surprise. The prisoners have shot down the head keeper and captured the warden and a dozen or more of the guards. They've set fire to some of the workshops and got access to the prison arsenal, so that they have a complete supply of firearms."

Walter Hapworth gave vent to a prolonged whistle.

"Looks mighty bad," he commented.

"You bet it is bad," agreed Ted. "Janvier holds the most desperate convicts in the State. Many of them are under life sentences. Quite a number are awaiting electrocution. Put rifles and revolvers in the hands of men like these, and you can see what a job the authorities have cut out for them."

"I should say so!" exclaimed Hapworth.

"But of course the revolt will be put down. It always is. The police, the State troopers, and the militia, if necessary, can be depended on to stamp it out."

"Yes," agreed Ted. "But the problem is to do it with as little loss of life as possible. I told you that they'd captured the warden and a dozen or so of the guards and are holding them as hostages. They're threatening to kill them unless their demands are met."

"What are their demands?" asked Hapworth.

"That they be given safe exit from the prison gates and that automobiles be in waiting for them outside the gates in which they can drive away. They propose to carry the guards with them with pistols at their heads and threaten to kill them at the least sign of interference. Once in the cars and at a safe distance from the prison, so they promise, they will release the guards and take their chances on making their get-away."

"Ingenious enough," observed Hapworth.

"Yes, it's been carefully planned," replied Ted. "It's no mere hit-or-miss affair. I shouldn't wonder but that old fox, Brewster Gale, were the brains behind it. It seems to give them, for a time at least, the trump cards. They figure that the authorities will hesitate to let a dozen of the guards be slaughtered."

"But of course that's a colossal bluff," remarked Hapworth. "Those convicts, desperate as they are, wouldn't dare kill a dozen men in cold blood."

"Wouldn't they?" countered Ted. "That's where you're wrong. They've killed three of them already."

Walter Hapworth was staggered.

"It's frightful!" he exclaimed. "And you say you're going to get mixed up in this? What's the big idea? It's up to the police and soldiers to subdue it."

"Ordinarily, yes. But this case is altogether out of the ordinary. It seems the authorities have got wind of an attempt by gangster friends to help the convicts from the air."

"From the air?" repeated Hapworth.

"Yes," replied Ted. "It's leaked out that a number of gangsters, friends of the convicts and some of them relatives of the men condemned to electrocution, are planning to fly over the prison and drop bombs to make breaches in the walls through which the prisoners can make their escape. You ask me how I've got mixed up in this. Here's the answer."

He tossed a paper to his friend.

It was a telegram from the Governor of the State, addressed to Ted Scott.

Hapworth smoothed it out and read:

"Have learned that an attack may be made on the prison at Janvier by gangsters in airplane to aid the revolt now in progress. I appeal to you, as the State's most distinguished citizen and a world famous airman, to help thwart this design. No one else I can turn to with such confidence. If you consent, will send you two trustworthy men with machine gun. Haste necessary. Answer."

Hapworth looked up from the paper.

"What did you answer?"

"Told him I'd be glad to help and to hurry his men along."

"Of course you did! I didn't need to ask, knowing you as I do. But for the love of Pete, Ted, be careful! By jove, I believe here are your men now!"

A powerful car, covered with dust, whirled up in front of the Bromville House where this conversation had been going on, and a stalwart young fellow in the uniform of a State trooper jumped out and came hurriedly up the steps.

"Mr. Scott?" he asked, as he looked at Ted. "But of course! I've seen your picture a thousand times. A great honor to shake hands with you, Mr. Scott. My name's Stanley, of the State police. Sent here by the Governor. My running mate, Brandon, is in the car with a machine gun."

"Good!" said Ted. "Glad to meet you. Be with you in a minute."

Ted Scott dashed inside in order to say farewell to his foster parents, Eben and Charity Browning.

"Bad business this, Mr. Stanley," remarked Walter Hapworth. "What's the latest news from the prison?"

Stanley shook his head.

"Not so good," he said. "They've just killed a fourth guard and chucked his body out of the window, and several of the police and soldiers manning the walls have been killed and others wounded. The mutineers are keeping up a steady fire and seem to have plenty of ammunition."

Ted Scott had a hard time getting away from Charity Browning, who clung to him in mortal fear of what might happen to him. Now he darted out on the porch.

"Let's go," he announced. "Good-by, Walter."

"Good luck, old man!" said Hapworth, wringing his friend's hand fervently.

Ted Scott and Stanley jumped into the car, where Ted was introduced to Brandon, a clear-eyed, efficient young fellow of the same type as his comrade. In the tonneau was a machine gun of the latest make.

"I suppose this thing will be barking before

long," remarked Ted, with a smile, indicating the weapon.

"Seems likely," returned Brandon.

They whizzed down to the Bromville Airport, where Ted Scott's plane, stored with fuel and supplies and groomed to the minute, stood with its quivering wings outspread, as though eager to be off.

"All ready, Jackson?" asked Ted of his mechanic, as he leaped from the car to the ground.

"She's fit to fly for a man's life," replied Jackson. "Wish you'd let me go along with you, Ted."

"Good of you to offer, Jackson," replied Ted. "But no, you have a wife and family. Nothing doing, old man. Just lend a hand, will you, and get that machine gun into the plane? There we are. Now help Mr. Stanley and Mr. Brandon adjust their parachutes. That's it. All set? Knock away the blocks, Jackson."

The mechanic obeyed, gave a whirl to the propeller and the *Lightning Streak,* as Ted's new plane had been christened, roared down the runways and zoomed into the skies.

Ted turned her nose toward Janvier and consulted the clock on his instrument board.

"Let's see," he murmured. "Janvier's about eighty miles away. We ought to make it in about forty minutes."

He eased the engine gradually into full throttle and the *Lightning Streak* whizzed across the sky as though bent on justifying her name.

Barely half an hour had elapsed when they saw directly ahead of them a great volume of smoke rising high in the air.

"That's Janvier!" cried Ted.

"Looks as though the whole city were burning," muttered Brandon.

"The prison's almost a city in itself, and it's on fire," observed Stanley. "Gee, what a sight!"

The exclamation was evoked by the scene that met their eyes as they swung into the zone of action.

As Stanley had remarked, the prison itself was almost like a small city. Its buildings covered hundreds of acres. The great main building, in which the majority of the prisoners were confined, formed three sides of a quadrangle, its frowning walls rising to a height of five stories, each story a tier of cells with barred windows.

At various places in the prison yard were other buildings, workshops, repair shops, foundries, laundries, tool sheds, and other structures required for the purposes of the prison.

Some of these were already in ruins. Others were still burning, and the volumes of smoke

were stabbed through and through with leaping flames.

On the ground in front of the main building, behind the walls of which the mutineers were fighting, lay a number of motionless figures, which the occupants of the airplane conjectured to be those of the slaughtered guards. They shuddered at the thought that that pile might be added to by other victims, even as they looked.

About the whole prison was a massive wall, thirty or more feet in height, studded with armor-proof sentry boxes.

Outside the wall on the city side, almost all the population of Janvier seemed to be gathered, augmented by people from other towns who had been drawn to the scene of conflict. A cordon of police kept the spectators at a safe distance.

Within the cordon were fire engines that had thrown up water towers, from which tons of water were being poured on the burning buildings.

Ladders had been laid against the outside of the walls, and from the top rungs of these a steady fire from rifles and machine guns was being kept up by police, troopers, and soldiers against the walls of the main prison, behind which lay the mutineers. From the convicts

came answering volleys that showed they still had plentiful supplies of ammunition.

It was one of the most audacious challenges that had ever been flung by convicts at the power of the state that held them in thrall. If it proved successful, it would be full of grim omen for all the forces of law and order.

After one comprehensive, sweeping glance at the pandemonium raging below him, Ted Scott's eyes searched the skies about and above him.

Keen as a hawk's, they detected a tiny speck high up that rapidly grew larger and resolved itself into a big and powerful airplane.

"See it?" said Ted to Stanley and Brandon, indicating the newcomer. "Shouldn't wonder if those are the gangsters we were warned against. At any rate, we'll get closer and see. Got that machine gun of yours ready?"

"It's ready," said Brandon grimly.

Ted pulled the stick and the *Lightning Streak* darted up into the air like a falcon in pursuit of its prey.

"Take these glasses," directed Ted, shoving them over to Stanley, "and see what you can make of that fellow. It may be a mail plane—it's big enough for that—and we don't want to get into difficulties with Uncle Sam."

The young trooper snatched the glasses up,

glued them to his eyes, and scanned the oncoming plane narrowly.

"It hasn't the markings of a mail plane," he announced after a moment. "In fact, it hasn't any marks of identification at all that I can make out."

"None at all?" muttered Ted. "That shows they've been painted out on purpose. No honest pilot would do that. Guess they're the gangsters we're looking for, all right. Seem to be carrying many men?"

"I can see several," replied Stanley. "They're bending out to look at the fight going on below. And I catch the glint of rifles."

"That's enough," said Ted. "They're the gangsters. Get ready."

He was directly beneath the strange plane now and shooting up toward it like an arrow.

"Look out!" cried Brandon. "She's dropping a bomb!"

But Ted Scott's eyes had already seen.

A small cylindrical object was coming straight toward the *Lightning Streak!*

CHAPTER II

A Narrow Escape

With the lightning quickness of thought and action that had made him famous throughout the world, Ted Scott whirled his plane to the right just in time to escape the deadly bomb, which whizzed by within ten feet of him.

It exploded with a thunderous roar a hundred feet below. Had it struck the plane, it would have shattered it into fragments and blown its occupants into shreds.

As it was, in set in motion torrents of air that made the *Lightning Streak* rock as though on the billows of the ocean. It was all that Ted could do to keep it from turning turtle. But by consummate craftsmanship he managed to get it under control and bring it to an even keel.

"A close shave!" exclaimed Stanley.

"If anyone else than Ted Scott had been at the controls, we'd have been dead men," declared Brandon.

The struggle had taken valuable time, and

the bandit plane had improved this to the utmost. It had made for a point directly above the east wall of the prison and, hovering above it with power largely shut off, had dropped five or six heavy bombs in succession.

Ted Scott could see that the terrific explosions had made a great breach in the wall. At the same time, it had driven away from that part of the wall the police and soldiers who were guarding it, confused and bewildered by this sudden onslaught from the skies.

The convicts, who had been looking for this reinforcement, were quick to take advantage of it. Out of the main building they poured in a serried host, firing their rifles and revolvers as they came.

They made a rush for the opening in the wall. A few of them got through and scattered in flight. Some of them took possession of automobiles that were parked in the vicinity, ejecting the occupants, if there were any, unceremoniously at the point of their guns.

Ted Scott had caught glimpses through the smoke of some of these proceedings. But he paid little attention to them at the moment, for all his thoughts were centered on the enemy plane.

That plane was now hovering above the forces of the State, evidently preparing to release more bombs into their ranks. This must

be prevented at all hazards, and Ted made straight for the gangsters' plane.

"Give them a volley, Brandon," he commanded, as he reached a position slightly to the right of the bombarding plane.

The rat-a-tat-tat of the machine gun signaled the release of a host of bullets, most of which found their mark in the sides of the machine, and two of which found human marks, for a pair of the gangsters, either dead or wounded, slumped forward in the fuselage.

The scoundrels abandoned their attempt to release more bombs in order to turn against this new enemy. Rifles spat flame from the gangsters' plane, but most of them missed their marks, although Ted heard the thud of one bullet against the side of the *Lightning Streak*.

Brandon and Stanley had quickly reloaded the machine gun from new clips of cartridges and stood ready for another volley.

"Fire!" called Ted.

Again that ominous drumming and that hail of death.

While the young aviator and his companions watch the effect of the fusillade, it may be well, for the benefit of those who have not read the preceding volumes of this series, to tell who Ted Scott was and what had been his adventures up to the time this story opens.

Ted had no memory of his parents. His

earliest recollections went back only to the time when, an orphan, he had been brought from New England to Bromville, a small town in the Middle West, by James and Miranda Wilson. They were people in rather straitened circumstances, but they loved the little fellow and gave him what advantages and schooling they could. They died within a few months of each other when Ted was about ten years old, leaving him to the mercy of the world.

The plight of the little waif touched the kindly hearts of a childless elderly couple, Eben and Charity Browning, and they adopted him as their own. They soon became as attached to him as though he had been their own son, and Ted Scott in return loved them dearly.

Eben Browning, a genial, friendly, well liked man, was the proprietor of the Bromville House, at one time the only hotel in Bromville. It was a comfortable place without pretensions, but popular because of its home-like atmosphere and Charity's famous cooking.

Life went on serenely with the Brownings until the Devally-Hipson Corporation, a corporation that manufactured airplanes, established a mammoth plant in the town. Bromville sprang into new life. With the plant came hundreds of workmen and officials, and from a small town the place soon developed into a small city. New hotels sprang up,

equipped with all modern conveniences, and the old Bromville House was thrown into the background and its patronage fell off.

The greatest blow fell when the Hotel Excelsior, a magnificent hotel with a great golf course attached that attracted tournament players from all over the country, was built.

Against Brewster Gale, the proprietor of this, Eben Browning had a special grievance. He had owned the ground on which the hotel and golf course were constructed, and had sold it to Gale for what he regarded as a fair price. But apart from the few hundred dollars paid to bind the bargain, Eben did not receive a dollar of the purchase price. By a series of financial juggleries engineered by cunning and unscrupulous lawyers in Gale's pay, Eben Browning was cheated out of his money. The end of the transaction found Gale in possession of an apparently clear title.

As Ted grew older, he did all he could to help his foster parents about the hotel, but Eben and Charity were tormented with visions of the sheriff and the poorhouse. Things brightened somewhat when Ted found employment in the airplane works.

He loved airplanes and everything connected with them. The secret dream and the passion of his heart were to become a flyer. But for that it was necessary to go to a flying school,

and this would involve an expense of hundreds of dollars, besides the loss of wages while he was learning. It seemed to be out of the question.

One morning, Walter Hapworth, a wealthy young business man and expert golfer, who was attending a tournament in the town, called at the works, and Ted was assigned to show him through. Ted's familiarity with every feature of airplane work astonished Mr. Hapworth and drew him to the lad. Learning his secret ambition, he offered to loan him enough money to carry him through flying school.

Ted accepted with delight, went to flying school, and graduated with distinguished honors.

He sought and obtained a position in the United States Air Mail Service, and speedily became noted as one of its most daring and skillful flyers.

About that time the whole country was agog with interest over a prize of twenty-five thousand dollars that had been offered for the first successful air flight over the Atlantic from New York to Paris.

Ted wanted to enter the competition. But the plane and the funds necessary to make the venture mounted into thousands of dollars, and Ted Scott had practically no money.

Here again his good friend, Walter Hap-

worth, came to his help and offered to finance the expedition. Ted accepted, left the Air Service on leave of absence, and went to San Francisco to supervise the building of his plane.

From time to time news came out of the West that an unknown youngster named Scott was planning to enter the contest. The country shrugged its shoulders and laughed.

But it stopped laughing one day when Ted Scott stepped into his plane on the Pacific slope and whizzed over the Rockies to St. Louis in a single jump and in the fastest time that had ever been made by a man traveling alone. And when in one more jump he reached New York, he found himself the most-talked-of youth in America.

How on one misty morning he climbed into his plane, soared into the skies and turned the nose of his plane toward the yeasty surges of the Atlantic, how he winged his way over the vast expanse through fog and gale and sleet, how he went straight as an arrow to his mark and swooped down from the skies like a lone eagle on Paris, winning the prize and setting the whole world wild with excitement, are told in the first volume of this series, entitled: "Over the Ocean to Paris."

Following his return to America, Ted Scott enlisted in the Aviation section of the Red

Cross and did heroic work in rescuing victims of a terrible flood in the Mississippi Valley. Later on, he reëntered the Air Service and had many thrilling adventures in the dangerous passes of the Rockies. Still later, he made the fastest flight over the Pacific from the Pacific Coast to Hawaii.

Adventure was the very breath of life to him, and many countries were the scenes of his subsequent exploits. He made a daring trip over the West Indies in search of missing comrades. In Mexico, among the bandits, he came very close to losing his life. One of the sensational features of a record flight to Australia was the discovery that he was carrying a madman in his plane. Canada saw him when he served his own country in breaking up a smuggling ring that was carrying diamonds over the border. An expedition to Brazil after missing explorers brought him in contact with jaguars and anacondas, cannibals and head-hunters.

How he joined an expedition to the Antarctic regions, the perils he endured among frost and ice and blizzards, the desperate plights in which he found himself, and his final glorious feat in making the first air flight over the South Pole, are narrated in the preceding volume of this series, entitled: "Lost at the South Pole."

Now to return to Ted Scott as he and his companions watched breathlessly the effect of

the machine gun volley against the gangsters' plane.

"Got them, by Jove!" cried Stanley. "Went into them deep. Well aimed, Brandon!"

"Not so bad," agreed Brandon modestly.

"You've crippled them, sure enough!" exclaimed Ted. "See, they're turning tail and running."

The plane had indeed swerved around and was trying to make off. But it had received its death wound. It tossed and rocked like a ship in a tempest.

"It's the right wing!" cried Ted. "That last volley nearly severed it. It's drooping. By Jove, there is goes!"

There was a cracking as the wing dropped, helpless, hanging only by shreds. Even as Ted Scott and his companions looked, those shreds gave way. The gangsters' plane was doomed!

Nor was that doom long deferred. The pilot sought vainly to save his craft, but it was past saving. It whirled about helplessly and then plunged swiftly to the ground, crashing into a patch of woodland a little way from the prison.

CHAPTER III

Rascals at Large

A tremendous cheer rose from the crowd below that had watched that thrilling duel in the skies.

But there was no cheer from the desperate convicts. With the fall of their rascally helpers, their last hope faded. Defeat stared them in the face.

One last volley they poured into the ranks of the defenders. Then, as the police and the soldiers charged, the mutineers gave way and ran like rats to the shelter of the prison from which they had so lately emerged.

The revolt was broken. It was just a matter now of routing out the fugitives, disarming them, and putting them in irons.

Cheers arose as the eight guards yet left alive, together with the warden, were brought out to safety. Many of them had been beaten and cruelly abused, but at least they were alive.

In another hour the last of the convicts had been rounded up, guards of State troopers had

been established, the fires in the burning buildings had been extinguished, and the forces of law and order were again in the ascendant.

It had been a tremendous outbreak and might have resulted in a wholesale jail delivery had the gangsters in the plane been left free to pursue their nefarious work.

Ted and his companions had watched breathlessly the descent and wreck of the enemy plane.

"Well, that's that," muttered Brandon, as he laid the machine gun on the floor of the fuselage. "I guess there'll be no more need of this barker for a while."

"It's certainly done the business," agreed Stanley, "although it wouldn't have had a chance to work if Mr. Scott hadn't been as lightning quick as he was in dodging that bomb."

"We'll have to go down and see if we can do anything for those fellows," said Ted. "There isn't one chance in a hundred that anyone of them is left alive, but if so, we'll try to get them to a hospital."

He circled about until he found a field that seemed to offer a fair prospect of landing. Then he swooped down, brought the plane to a stop, and he and his companion hurried to the patch of woods where the gangsters' plane had fallen.

They found it a tangled mass of wreckage. One glance sufficed to show that all of its

scoundrelly occupants had been killed instantly.

Hard, evil faces they were, stamped with crime, outlaws and potential murderers, and the world was the better for their taking off.

"Doesn't seem to be anything we can do," remarked Stanley, after they had established the fact that no life remained in the sprawled and silent forms.

"Nothing except to notify the authorities so that they can take charge of the bodies," said Ted. "Suppose we go now to the prison. I'm eager to find out how many escaped."

They hastened to the warden's offices. That official had been badly beaten and had been conveyed to a hospital. But others in authority greeted Ted and his companions warmly, and the instant it was known that the famous flyer was present there was a rush from all quarters to look upon his face.

A tall, dignified man made his way through the press. It was Governor Ogilvie, who had made a hurried trip from the capital to be on the scene of action. Ted had previously met him, and the two shook hands warmly.

"I want to give you not only my personal thanks but the thanks of the State for your quick response to my call and the magnificent maneuvering and dauntless courage with which you attacked and destroyed the gangsters' plane," said the Governor. "But I might have

known that Ted Scott wouldn't hesitate a moment to risk his life in the way of duty."

"Oh, that was nothing," disclaimed Ted. "Here are the boys you want to thank, the boys that did the shooting," indicating Stanley and Brandon, who blushed with embarrassment and pleasure. "I tell you, Governor, these lads are the real goods, and if they don't get promotion for this day's work I'll be ashamed that I'm a citizen of this State."

The Governor's eyes twinkled.

"You won't have any reason to be ashamed," he promised. "I'm proud of both of you," he said, addressing the young State troopers, "and before twenty-four hours have passed you shall have substantial proofs of the State's gratitude."

The Governor was called away just then, and Ted sought out the official who was acting in the warden's place.

"Have you figured out just how many of the prisoners escaped?" he asked.

"Only roughly," replied Thurston, the acting warden. "The count is going on now. The number seems to be something under twenty. But most of them will be recaptured within the next twenty-four hours. Every road in the State is being watched, and they can't escape for long. But instead of that twenty there

might have been hundreds at large if you hadn't destroyed the gangsters' plane. Gee, you took awful chances with that bunch, Mr. Scott!"

"All in the day's work," replied Ted. "By the way, you had three convicts here, father and two sons named Gale. Did they make their escape?"

Thurston consulted the list in his hand.

"They probably did," he said regretfully. "I see their names are here as those that haven't yet been found. Too bad, too, for they're suspected of having been the ringleaders in the affair. That is, the old man is. The sons didn't have any more than brains enough to get along with, but with the old man it was different. He's as shifty as a weasel and as cunning as a fox. But don't worry, Mr. Scott. They won't escape the dragnet for long."

Ted Scott privately was not quite sure of that. He knew Brewster Gale! Knew him to his sorrow! Knew him to his cost!

In all the world he had no bitterer enemy, an enemy who had not hesitated on occasion to seek his life.

This hatred was shared by Gale's twin sons, Gregory and Duckworth—Greg and Duck for short—worthless, dissipated young men slightly older than Ted.

Together in a multiude of ways the three had plotted Ted's downfall, even striking at him through Eben and Charity Browning.

Again and again Ted had spiked their schemes and turned their weapons on themselves, and at last when their cup of wickedness was full he had succeeded in bringing them to justice and having them sent to prison for a term of years.

Then at last he had been able to breathe freely. The miscreants were safe behind the bars. Eben and Charity were safe from their machinations.

But now had come this revolt. The scoundrels had apparently made their escape. Their hearts no doubt were seething with malice and vindictiveness against Ted and his people. When the opportunity was afforded they would strike; and if no opportunity offered they would make one.

Thurston had been watching the young aviator narrowly as these thoughts coursed through his mind.

"Seems to have upset you a bit, Mr. Scott," Thurston said. "I remember now that the Gales were sent here in connection with a plot that might have resulted in your death. I'm sorry that they're at large. I'll have special efforts made for their recapture. Most cer-

tainly, we can't do too much for you after what you've done for us to-day."

"Thanks very much," replied Ted, as he shook Thurston's hand in parting and edged his way through the crowd.

He bade a hearty farewell to Stanley and Brandon, reached his plane, jumped in, and after a short run lifted the *Lightning Streak* into the skies.

The old familiar thrill tingled through his veins as he found himself in the cool, clean stretches of the upper air. He had gone up thousands of times, but that same thrill was always there. Everything that was sordid connected with the earth seemed to be stripped away. He was conscious of a keen spiritual exaltation as though he were a brother of the sun and the stars.

Especially keen was that feeling to-day because of the contrast to the scenes of blood and smoke and disorder through which he had passed.

For some time this feeling of elation persisted, but then was moderated by more sober reflections. He could not deny that he was profoundly stirred by the escape of the Gales. That was the one bitter drop in his cup of satisfaction. As long as those scoundrels were at large, he would have to be on his guard.

As far as he himself was concerned, that bothered him little. But he was intensely concerned for Eben and Charity. They would the more likely be singled out as targets as being the more defenceless.

He comforted himself, however, by the hope that the fugitives would be rounded up. The chances were against their ultimate escape. Even now they were being hunted for by hundreds, and the police of every town in the State would be on the alert. It would be hard to break through that cordon. Hard, that is, for most, with their brutish, degraded intellects. Not so hard, perhaps, for Brewster Gale!

Reaching the Bromville Airport, Ted made his landing. Jackson came running up to him as the plane came to a stop.

"Are you hurt?" asked the mechanic anxiously. "I've been on pins and needles ever since you left."

"Not a bit hurt," replied Ted cheerily, as he jumped out and drew off his helmet. "Had a rather exciting day, though."

"It's easy to see that," replied Jackson, as he scanned the plane. "Three bullets in it! Any one of them might have bumped you off."

"Three?" asked Ted, in surprise. "I heard one strike the plane, but no more. Those fellows must have been shooting straighter than

I thought. But a miss is as good as a mile, and I'm still sound in wind and limb."

In response to Jackson's eager questions, Ted narrated briefly the events of that tumultuous day.

"Gee, you were Johnny on the spot, all right!" burst out Jackson admiringly.

"Had a couple of dandy fellows with me," replied Ted. "There's one thing, Jackson, that isn't so good. The Gales got away."

"Those rattlesnakes?" exclaimed Jackson, much disturbed.

"That's what," affirmed Ted. "Of course they may be recaptured, but they hadn't been at last reports."

"Bad news!" muttered Jackson. "I shan't be easy till they're in the jug again."

"Same here," agreed Ted. "From now on, Jackson, we want to have eyes in the back of our heads. If they make good their escape, I have a hunch they may head this way after the hue and cry has died down."

"Trust me," replied Jackson. "I'll be on the watch day and night."

Ted made his way home, where he was greeted with infinite relief by Eben and Charity, as well as by Walter Hapworth, who, during his stay in town, was puttnig up at the Bromville House.

To them he had to narrate in all its details the thrilling happenings of the day, though he glossed over lightly his own part in the great drama.

"You're the most exasperating person, Ted," complained Charity. "It's like pulling teeth to get you to say what you did."

"It's something to have him admit that he was there at all," laughed Hapworth. "Never mind, the newspapers aren't so reticent, and we'll see Ted spread all over the front pages to-morrow. He can't hide his light under a bushel, no matter how hard he tries."

Ted's first impulse had been to say nothing to Eben and Charity about the escape of the Gales for fear of worrying them unduly. But sober second thought told him that they would be sure to hear of it anyway from the gossip of the town in which the Gales had once been such prominent figures. Besides, they ought to know in order to be on their guard.

So he told them, and their faces were grave as they listened. They knew as well as Ted himself that there were no lengths to which those rascals would not go in order to get revenge.

"But there's no use worrying just yet," Ted concluded. "They'll have to lie low for a while before they attempt anything. And perhaps

in a day or two we'll learn that they've been recaptured."

"Our times are in His hand," murmured good old Charity softly. "I'll just keep on prayin' and trust in the Lord."

The first thing Ted did when he came downstairs early the next morning was to snatch up the newspaper.

Great headlines told of the prison revolt, and the story that followed rang with plaudits at the way Ted Scott, the idol of the nation, had risked his life to help subdue it.

To this Ted paid scant attention. He looked at once for the list of convicts who had escaped.

Eighteen of these there were in all, but ten had already been recaptured.

And in the list of those who were still at large were three names that he knew well—too well.

Brewster Gale, Duckworth Gale, Gregory Gale!

CHAPTER IV

Night Prowlers

Walter Hapworth came out on the porch of the hotel and noted Ted Scott's absorption.

"Why the frown on the classic brow?" he chaffed, as he sat down beside him.

"Here's the answer," replied Ted, handing his friend the paper and indicating the list. "Read it and weep."

Hapworth ran his eye over the names, and his own brow creased when he came to those of the Gales.

"So those skunks have really made their getaway!" he exclaimed.

"Looks like it," replied Ted gloomily. "Of course they may be nabbed yet, but every hour that passes makes it more unlikely."

"Probably making for Canada or Mexico by this time," conjectured Hapworth. "I see that the authorities are offering a reward of five thousand dollars for their recapture."

"I'd gladly give twenty thousand of my own money to have them once more behind the

bars," declared Ted. "If I had the slightest inkling of the direction they've taken, I'd be inclined to take up the pursuit myself."

"And I'd help you," said Hapworth. "Perhaps something will come to light that will give us a clue. In the meantime we'll have to trust to the police and the detectives."

For many days thereafter Ted Scott scanned the papers anxiously, hoping each time he opened one it would tell him of the miscreants having been recaptured.

But in this he was doomed to disappointment. Of the eight missing convicts three were ultimately taken. But the Gales were among the five who were still at large.

Gradually the sensation created by the revolt died out. Other things absorbed the attention of the public and filled the columns of the papers. Except to those directly interested, the prison mutiny was a thing of the past.

Ted himself lost some of his anxiety as the weeks wore on without any outstanding development in the case. After all, he told himself, he had been unduly worried. Probably all the Gales were interested in was in putting as much space between themselves and the United States as possible.

Another thing that engrossed the young aviator's attention was putting the finishing

touches to a book he was writing concerning his South Pole experiences, and which his publishers were anxious to get in their hands as soon as possible.

It was two months after the revolt had been quelled that Ted was awakened one night by the consciousness that someone had entered his room. He started up and saw that the figure was that of Walter Hapworth, who occupied the adjoining room.

"That you, Walter?" he said. "You startled me somewhat. What's up?"

"Don't make a noise," warned Hapworth. "We don't want to awake the others. I thought I smelled smoke."

Ted Scott was out of bed in an instant.

"Where did it seem to come from?" he asked, as he hastily threw on his bath robe. "Perhaps somebody is burning leaves or rubbish outside."

"I thought of that," replied Hapworth. "But it's too late at night for that sort of thing. Besides, the smell seemed to come from inside the house. Come out into the hall and you'll smell it, too."

This fact Ted verified the moment he stepped into the corridor. It was not a pronounced smell, but still enough to tell him that something in the house was burning.

It came from somewhere in the lower part,

and swiftly and silently Ted sped down the stairs with Hapworth close on his heels.

Everything was as it should have been on the lower floor, but in addition to the smoke Ted could hear a faint crackling.

He flung open the cellar door. Now he knew whence the smell of smoke had come! There was a glare of light in the cellar, and as Ted bounded down the stairs he saw that all one side of a wood bin was ablaze.

There was a garden hose coiled up in one corner. Ted rushed over, fastened it to a faucet, and turned on the water.

"Here, Walter," cried Ted, as he thrust the spouting hose into Hapworth's hands. "Turn this on the flames while I run up and get some hand grenades. We can manage this thing without sending in an alarm."

For the next five minutes the two worked arduously, and finally succeeded in extinguishing the fire.

"That nose of yours is all right, Walter," panted Ted, when the work was done. "If you hadn't detected that thing just at the minute you did, the fire would have got such headway that the whole house might have gone. As it is, we've put it out and no one is the wiser."

"How in thunder do you suppose the thing started?" asked Hapworth. "If there'd been

any fire in the furnace, you might have thought it had come from overheating."

"Hard to tell," remarked Ted. "A hundred things may start a fire. A crossing of electric wires. A mouse nibbling a match. A——"

He broke off suddenly as his eye rested on a can in a corner.

"Now where did that come from, I wonder!" he exclaimed, as he went over toward it. "I know it wasn't here when I was down here yesterday."

He picked it up, unscrewed the cap, and smelled of it.

"Gasoline!" he exclaimed. "There's a little left in it yet. How in the mischief did that ever get down in the cellar? Eben always keeps it in the garage."

A sudden suspicion flamed into his eyes.

He rushed over to the unburned part of the wood bin, felt of it, smelled of it.

It had been drenched with gasoline!

"There you are, Walter! There's been nothing accidental about this fire. Somebody started it on purpose. And here," as he pursued the trail to other parts of the cellar, "are other things that have been soaked with gasoline. In fact, everything that's wood is covered with it."

Hapworth verified this with his own eyes. He was wild with horror and indignation.

"The fiend!" he cried. "The unspeakable scoundrel! A little more time for that fire to get a foothold, and every one in this house might have been burned to death."

"Exactly," agreed Ted. "But the fellow didn't care, provided he accomplished his purpose."

"But what was that?" asked Hapworth. "Robbery? A chance to loot the house in the confusion?"

"Worse than that," replied Ted. "He—or they—wasn't bent on stealing. He wanted to kill."

"Kill whom?" asked Hapworth.

"Me, primarily," was the answer. "Eben and Charity next. All three of us, if possible. And in order to do that he—or they—were willing to take the chance of killing fifty others."

"I see what you're driving at," observed Hapworth. "You think that the Gales——"

"Hit it the first time," said Ted. "Yes, the Gales. One of them anyway—perhaps two of them, possibly all three. They're the only enemies I have on earth that would be willing to go so far as this to get their revenge. Let's see just how he—or they—got into the cellar."

Careful search revealed a small window in one part of the cellar from which the glass had

been removed, leaving a space large enough for a man of average size to crawl through.

Ted himself went out through it, and by the aid of his flashlight studied the ground, which was damp from recent rain.

"Here they are," he said in a low tone to Hapworth. "Men's footprints. Shoes of different sizes. There were two men; no more, no less. And it's a moral certainty that I know the names of the men who wore those shoes—Greg and Duck Gale!"

"Two of them, were there?" murmured Hapworth.

He started violently.

"By Jove, I've just remembered!" he exclaimed.

"Remembered what?" asked Ted.

"A circumstance that occurred earlier in the evening," replied his friend. "I was sitting at my window looking out and thinking of nothing much but that it was about time to be getting to bed. It was getting late and the streets were about deserted.

"Then I caught sight of a couple of fellows walking along slowly on the other side of the street. They didn't seem to be going anywhere in particular, but rather loitering. I watched them idly. They kept under the shadow of the trees and I couldn't get a clear sight of them. I noticed, though, that they were of

the same height and build, and some nonsensical jingle about twins came into my mind. They were roughly dressed, and I thought they might be panhandlers, wanting to come over and strike Eben for a square meal, but not quite able to screw their courage up to the sticking point. They disappeared shortly afterward and as I was very sleepy by that time I forgot all about it and slipped into bed."

"It's dollars to doughnuts that they were Greg and Duck Gale!" exclaimed Ted. "Probably they were reconnoitering and sizing up the situation. I'm going out to look for them."

"Not a chance in the world that they're anywhere around now," judged Hapworth. "They'd probably beat it out of town as soon as they had got the fire started."

"Possibly," admitted Ted. "Then again they might have wanted to glut their vengeance by watching the house go up in smoke. At any rate, I'm going to take a chance."

"I'll go too," declared Hapworth. "You take one direction and I'll take another. But you want to be well heeled. They're probably armed."

"I'll slip a revolver into my pocket," said Ted. "Come along and get dressed. They'll tumble pretty soon that something's gone wrong with the fire and then they'll skip."

They made sure that the last spark had been

extinguished, went upstairs and slipped into their clothes.

They went out of the back door to escape observation from any eyes that might be watching the front, and keeping in the shadows as much as possible, emerged on a back street.

There they parted and went in different directions. It was agreed that if either came to grips with the pair, a shot in the air would summon the other.

For nearly an hour Ted Scott stole down one street and up another, eyes and ears intent for any suspicious sight or sound.

Then his heart quickened, for, on turning a corner, he saw at some distance ahead of him two dim figures moving hurriedly.

As they passed under a street light one of them turned and looked behind him. As he did so, the light fell full on his face.

It was the face of Gregory Gale!

CHAPTER V

The Mysterious Letter

Ted Scott shrank back into the shadows as Greg Gale turned about, not quickly enough, however, to escape detection.

Greg spoke hurriedly to his companion, and the two started running at the top of their speed.

There was no need of secrecy now, and Ted was after them like the wind.

Although fear lent wings to the feet of the fugitives, Ted was far swifter than either of the two, and was gaining upon them rapidly when his foot struck a break in the sidewalk and he was flung headlong.

The fall knocked the breath completely out of him, and he lay there gasping, utterly unable to move. He had struck his head, too, in falling and it was whirling around like a top.

Finally he managed to stand by clutching the trunk of a tree and holding on until his reeling brain had somewhat steadied.

Several minutes passed before he found him-

self steady on his feet, and long before that his quarry had vanished. Probably they had twisted and doubled as soon as they got out of his sight, and a hunt for them would be futile.

Still, he could not bring himself to give up the search, and he maintained the quest for another hour, at the end of which time he ran up against Walter Hapworth, who had caught no glimpse and heard no sound of the fugitives.

"I muffed it!" complained Ted bitterly. "Had them practically right in my hands and let them slip through. Kick me, Walter."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," replied Hapworth. "You've nothing to reproach yourself for. Just a bit of hard luck that couldn't be helped. It's fortunate you didn't hurt yourself worse than you did. Well, they've got away for to-night, anyway. What's the next thing on the program? I suppose you ought to go right to headquarters and notify the police."

Ted shook his head.

"I don't think so, Walter," he said. "The Bromville House would come in for a good deal of undesirable publicity. It doesn't help a hotel any to have it known that firebugs have their eyes on it. It would hurt the place like the mischief."

"Of course you're right," murmured Hapworth. "I never thought of that."

"One thing I will do, though," said Ted.

"I'll call up Thurston at the State Prison and tell him that the Gale twins have been seen in this vicinity. That will give a tip to the detectives that may be of help in running them down. Of course, I won't tell Thurston anything about the fire. Just tell him that I caught sight of the rascals on the street at night and gave chase to them, but couldn't catch them."

"That's the best plan," agreed Hapworth. "And now let's call it a night and get what little sleep we can."

The next morning Ted revealed to Eben the scoundrelly doings of the night.

"The infernal rascals!" exclaimed Eben wrathfully. "We might all have been burned in our beds!"

"A lot they'd have cared for that," replied Ted. "They're murderers at heart. But keep this strictly under your hat. I'll patch up things in the cellar, so that we won't have to call in local carpenters. And don't say anything to Charity about it. She has enough to worry about without that being added to it."

Ted called up Thurston. The acting warden thanked him heartily for the information and promised to act on it at once.

"We've copped two more of the missing convicts," he said.

"Was Brewster Gale one of them?" asked Ted eagerly.

"No," was the regretful reply. "We gathered in Hagan and Spinelli. I'd far rather Gale had been one of them. He and his sons are the only escaped convicts now at large. If we nab Gale, we will be sure to let you know at once."

The days passed and lengthened into weeks without any such call coming from the prison. Three months had now elapsed since the outbreak of the revolt, and not the faintest trace had been found of the elder Gale's whereabouts. He had vanished as completely as though he had melted into thin air.

Returning one afternoon from an extended air flight, Ted Scott found a letter awaiting him.

He glanced at the postmark and saw that it was Denver, Colorado. He had many friends there, for it had been his terminal point when he had been flying in the Rocky Mountain Division of the Air Mail Service. He wondered idly from whom it was. Bill Twombley, Roy Benedict, Ed Allenby, old comrades of his in the service?

But the handwriting on the envelope was not like that of anyone he knew. It was in lead pencil, and the scrawl was sprawling and irregular, as though the hand that wrote it had trembled.

He tore open the envelope and saw that the

message, also in lead pencil, consisted of a number of sheets that looked as though they had been torn from a memorandum book.

Before reading the letter, he glanced at the signature. It was that of Andy Wilson.

"Andy Wilson," he thought, as he cudgeled his memory. "I don't remember anyone of that name. But that's not surprising, considering the number of people I've met at one time or another."

He commenced to read rather indifferently, but the very first sentence made him straighten up with a jerk.

"My name is Andy Wilson," the letter began, "and I'm writing to ask the help of the man that my brother, James Wilson, brought up to be the greatest aviator in the world."

"Brother of James Wilson, the first 'father' I ever knew!" Ted muttered to himself as his thoughts went back to the gentle, kindly man, who, with his wife, Miranda, had taken care of him for the first ten years of his life. "And Andy Wilson wants my help. Well, you can bet that any brother of James Wilson can have all the help that I am able to give him. Now let's see just what kind of help he has in mind."

But this was not easy to determine, and as Ted read on and on he became the more perplexed.

It was a rambling letter, written evidently

by a man not much used to handling a pen or expressing himself clearly.

Andy Wilson wrote that he was in a hospital at Denver, which he named. He was a gold prospector and had been hunting for the precious metal in Alaska. Something, which Ted could not fully make out from the disconnected story, had made it necessary for him to leave Alaska in haste, abandoning a store of nuggets that he and his companions had accumulated.

On his return to the States he had been taken ill when in Denver and had been conveyed to the hospital in which he was now lying. The doctor who attended him there and the nurse who had been assigned to him, Andy said, were in a conspiracy to rob him of his fortune.

How they were attempting to do this was not clear from the letter. But that Andy believed thoroughly in the conspiracy was evident from the desperate earnestness with which he wrote. Lying there helpless, he could do nothing to thwart their plans. It was in his mind that he would have been up and around long ago if for some purpose of their own they had not kept him sick and weak.

In this emergency his thoughts had turned to Ted Scott, whose brilliant career he had followed with pride because his brother James had reared the child. He wrote that he knew

of Ted's courage and skill and begged him to come to him at Denver, where he would tell him all about the net in which he was entangled.

He could not give the full details in the letter, he wrote, in the first place because he was too weak for a long letter and besides he was watched. He had had to write this letter by piecemeal at odd moments and had had to bribe an attendant to smuggle it out to the post.

Ted Scott was deeply touched by the man's distress. He was also profoundly perplexed.

How much of that letter was true? How much was imaginary?

He did not question for a moment the sincerity and good faith of the writer. Those things stood out everywhere in the letter. Whether the things stated were true or not, the writer certainly believed them to be true.

But how much of that belief was worth anything? Might they not be the maunderings of a sick brain? Did Andy Wilson really have the fortune that he alleged was being stolen from him or was the whole thing the hallucination of a tired, wornout, old prospector, who had dwelt so long on the thought of gold that he really thought that he had accumulated the wealth he had been seeking for so long?

It seemed incredible, too, that a doctor and a nurse, belonging to professions that had high

ethical standards, could descend to such rascality as to ruin their helpless patient.

Still, such things had happened. They might be happening now. He was in such a brown study that he started when he heard Hapworth's voice close beside him.

"Why that sudden start?" joked Hapworth, as he dropped into a chair. "Guilty conscience?"

"Not exactly," replied Ted. "Take a squint at that," and he tossed over Andy Wilson's letter.

Hapworth read it with growing interest and surprise.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Ted, as Hapworth handed back the letter.

"I hardly know what to think," returned Hapworth thoughtfully. "My first impression was that it was written by a crazy man. But, somehow or other, it rings true. What are you going to do about it?"

"Do?" replied Ted. "There's only one thing for me to do. I'm going to light out for Denver as fast as my plane can carry me!"

CHAPTER VI

On the Wing

"Good old scout!" exclaimed Walter Hapworth warmly, in response to the young aviator's statement. "Trust Ted Scott to do the generous and kindly thing!"

"Of course, it may be a fool's errand," observed Ted. "But I'd never forgive myself if I turned a deaf ear to that letter. It wouldn't let me sleep at night. In the first place, it's the only chance I've ever had to do something for the family of the man who did so much for me when I was too young to do anything for myself. Then again, if there's really anything in this talk of a conspiracy, it's up to me to do anything I can to thwart it, altogether apart from the fact that Andy Wilson is the intended victim."

"Even suppose when I get there I find the whole thing's a crazy dream," Ted went on, "and that Andy, instead of being wealthy, hasn't even coffee money. All the more reason I should be there to give him a helping

hand and put him on his feet. At any rate, I'm going to see the thing through to a finish."

"When are you going?" asked Hapworth.

"As soon as Jackson can get the plane ready," replied Ted. "Probably the first thing to-morrow morning."

"Want to take a passenger along?" asked Hapworth.

"Do you mean you'd like to go with me?" asked Ted delightedly. "Gee, that would be great! I'd have suggested it myself, but I thought your business would keep you here for a while."

"No," said Hapworth. "I've just about finished what work I had in this part of the country, and I was thinking of going on to my airplane factory in San Francisco. So I'll go with you, anyway as far as Denver and go on the rest of the way by rail."

"Why not stop in Denver for a day or two and go with me to the hospital?" suggested Ted. "Two heads are better than one, and I'd like to discuss with you whatever information we get from Wilson."

"Suits me right down to the ground," assented Hapworth. "I don't mind telling you that my curiosity is mightily stirred by this queer letter from the old boy, and I'd like to see what there really is in the conspiracy he talks about."

"All right, then," said Ted, jumping up from his seat. "I'll go right down now to the Airport and tell Jackson to see that the plane is all ready for an early start to-morrow morning. While I'm about it I may send a telegram to Wilson, telling him that we're coming. It may cheer the old boy up and——"

He stopped and pondered for a moment.

"No, on second thought, I don't think I will," he went on. "That doctor or the nurse, if they really are as bad as Wilson makes out, may read it and take alarm. It'll give them time to cook up some story or at any rate issue orders that we can't be permitted to see the patient. Much better to take them by surprise, just walk in and catch them off balance, so to speak."

Ted gave the news to Jackson, who promised to have the machine in perfect shape the next morning. Then he talked the matter over with Eben and Charity, who, although they always hated to have him leave them for trips, agreed that in this case there was nothing to be done but what Ted had decided on.

Bright and early the next morning, Ted Scott and Walter Hapworth started on their flight. The weather was all that could be desired, and what little wind there was came from behind, so that it helped rather than hindered the progress of the plane.

Their course took them directly over the State prison at Janvier. The burned buildings had been replaced, the breach in the walls mended, and everything seemed to be proceeding peacefully.

"Quiet enough now," commented Hapworth, as he gazed on the scene below.

"You should have seen it three months ago," remarked Ted. "Then you'd have thought the lid had been taken off the infernal regions and that all the demons had come to the surface. Smoke, flame, bullets, death!"

"Yet not one of the bullets caught the Gales," remarked Hapworth.

"I have a hunch their time will come," returned Ted.

"I don't know," said Hapworth pessimistically. "I've noticed that in most cases of escaped convicts, if they're not caught in the first few days, they're not caught at all. By that time they've got different clothes, have altered their appearance, and gotten out of the State. The authorities, too, lose interest after a while, new things take up their attention and the escape becomes an old story. If the man's recaptured at all later on, it's when he gets nabbed for committing a new crime."

All through the morning the weather continued fair and the airplane made rapid progress.

"Isn't she a beauty?" asked Ted proudly, as he patted the plane caressingly.

"She's eating up the miles, all right," responded Hapworth. "At what time do you expect to reach Denver?"

"Rather late to-night," replied Ted. "I purposely started when I did with a view to getting to Denver about midnight, when there'll be only a few people around the flying field. I want, if possible, to keep my presence in Denver secret."

Shortly after noon the skies began to cloud over and Ted scanned them anxiously.

"Looks as if we were going to have a storm," he muttered.

"There's a whole lot of wind in that bank of clouds," said Hapworth. "If we were on a boat now, it would be time to reef sails. As it is, all we can do is to let her drive."

The clouds grew blacker and blacker and gusts of wind began to strike the plane with increasing force. In a little while it was blowing half a gale.

Then the heavens opened and the rain came down in torrents. It beat furiously upon the windows of the cockpit. The roar of thunder was almost incessant. Blinding flashes of lightning shot across the sky. From sixty miles an hour, the fury of the wind increased until it was blowing a hundred miles and over.

Through all this wild welter of the elements, Ted Scott retained his coolness and jockeyed the plane as a skillful rider would a fractious steed, yielding here, urging there, with consummate craftsmanship. It was no wonder, Hapworth thought as he watched him, that Ted Scott was regarded as the most daring and skillful airman of the world.

For nearly an hour the battle with the storm continued. Then the demons of the tempest, realizing that they had met their master, withdrew sullenly from the contest. The rain subsided to a drizzle, the lightning ceased to flash, and the thunder retired growling into its distant caverns.

Then only did the young aviator relax. He was drenched with perspiration from the mental and physical strain.

"Toss us a sandwich, will you, Walter?" he asked. "That fight has made me hungry."

"You've surely earned it," said Hapworth, as he complied with his friend's request. "Gee, Ted, there's no one in the world that can handle a plane as you can! I feel as safe with you as though I were in a church."

"Oh, there are plenty that could do just as well," replied Ted. "Give the credit to the *Lightning Streak.* Did you see how she answered every movement of the controls? I

tell you, Walter, this old plane can do everything but talk."

The storm had driven them many miles out of their course, and Ted put on additional speed to make up for the distance he had lost.

They were approaching the Rockies now, and he had to exercise especial care, for it was the most dangerous region for a flying man on the whole North American Continent.

There were the treacherous air pockets of the gorges, that had drawn more than one hapless aviator down to death. And there were the jagged peaks rearing their heads toward the skies, collision with which meant certain destruction.

If anything went wrong here, Ted could not make a landing among those precipitous cliffs and canyons. The plane would almost inevitably be smashed and its occupants killed. The only thing to do, if the engine went dead, would be to abandon the plane and trust to the parachutes.

So the young aviator sought altitude, and the *Lightning Streak* shot up and up until it reached a height of seventeen thousand feet, enough to clear the highest summits and still have some two thousand feet to spare.

The air at that height was so rarefied that breathing was difficult. But that was a minor

inconvenience, and the two flyers bore it without grumbling, knowing that, if it got too distressing, they could have recourse to the oxygen tanks that Ted always carried with him with a view to such emergencies.

Dusk came and blended into night, but the moon rose early and flooded the ranges with glory, and in its light the plane sailed on serenely until, a little before midnight, the voyagers caught sight of the lights of Denver.

Ted Scott was among familiar surroundings now, and he made directly for the brilliantly lighted airport, where he made a perfect landing and delivered his plane to the care of one of the field attendants.

At that hour of the night there was none about except a few watchmen and mechanics, and as Ted had pulled up his collar and drew his helmet down over his face, he had no difficulty in escaping recognition.

At the hotel to which he and Walter Hapworth proceeded Ted registered under the name of his foster-father, Browning, a ruse he had adopted before when it was necessary to observe secrecy, and the sleepy clerk raised no question.

The pair were shown to their respective rooms that adjoined each other.

"Well, now that we're here, just what is your plan of campaign, Ted?" asked Hap-

worth when they were left to themselves.

"That will have to be determined by circumstances," replied Ted. "I think that we'd better call at the hospital to-morrow morning at the regular visiting hours, simply say that we're friends of Mr. Wilson, and ask to see the patient. There's nothing unusual about that, and there'll probably be no objection. If the nurse or the doctor becomes suspicious and tries to block us, we'll have to do what seems best at the time. We'll start in as cooing doves, even if we have to end as raging lions."

"The velvet glove first and the iron hand later," laughed Hapworth. "Well, that's sound sense. And now let's get to bed so as to be in good shape to-morrow."

They slept soundly and woke refreshed. After dispatching a good breakfast they started shortly after ten o'clock for the hospital in which Andy Wilson was lying.

They applied at the information desk, and the young woman in charge there consulted her list.

"Wilson, Andrew," she read. "Yes, he's in room number forty-eight. Third floor, near the end of the corridor to the left. I'll send some one to show you there, if you wish."

"Don't trouble, thanks," said Ted. "We'll find it all right."

They stepped into the elevator and were

taken to the third floor. They pursued their way along the corridor until they came to the room in question. At their knock the door was opened by a pretty nurse, who smiled at them pleasantly.

"Yes?" she said inquiringly.

"We called to see Mr. Wilson," said Ted. "We're friends of his."

"Come in," she said. "I'm sure he'll be glad to see you. He hasn't many visitors, poor old man, and he's lonely."

She ushered them in and tiptoed her way over to a screen that hid the patient and the bed from sight.

Ted and Hapworth looked at each other bewildered. This was altogether a different kind of nurse from the one they had expected to face.

"Nothing wicked about her," whispered Hapworth. "I thought to find a dragon. But this girl couldn't plot anything."

"Doesn't seem so," admitted Ted. "Still, you can't always—s-sh." The nurse was approaching.

"He's awake," she announced. "It will be all right for you to talk to him if you don't stay too long."

"How is he getting along?" asked Ted.

"Rather slowly," was the reply. "Doesn't rally very fast. But really I don't know very

much about the case. I'm not his regular nurse."

"Oh, you're not?" asked Ted in surprise.

"No." She dimpled at him a bit coquettishly, for Ted was a very personable young man. "Miss Bandmann has charge of him. But she's off duty for a couple of hours this morning and I'm substituting for her. I'm Miss Barclay. Miss Bandmann can tell you all about the case when you see her."

"I see," said Ted.

Here was luck with a vengeance! The dragon away! Ted blessed his stars that he had chosen this time for his call.

"A couple of old friends to see you, Mr. Wilson," Miss Barclay said brightly, as she led the way behind the screen. "Mr.?" She looked at the friends inquiringly.

"Mr. Hapworth and Mr. Browning," said Hapworth hastily.

"Mr. Hapworth and Mr. Browning," the nurse completed her announcement. "Now I'll leave you for a while and I'll tell you when you have been here long enough," she said, with another smile for Ted as she flitted from the room.

Ted and Hapworth looked with keen interest at the figure in the bed.

Andy Wilson was a man of powerful build, although the flesh had wasted away during his

long illness. His face was seamed and rugged, as of one who had fought with nature in the open. It was a kindly face, though, a good face, with a strong nose and jaw and honest gray eyes that were lighted up at the moment with a welcoming though rather bewildered smile as they rested on his visitors.

"Glad to see you," he said, "though I can't just seem to place you. It's good of you to come to see me. Jest sit down in them chairs an' take a load off your feet."

They complied and drew the chairs up near the bed.

"I don't know how soon we may be interrupted," said Ted in a low voice, "so I'm going to get right down to brass tacks. This friend of mine is Mr. Hapworth, as the nurse said, but I'm not Mr. Browning. My name is Ted Scott."

The effect upon Andy Wilson was electric.

CHAPTER VII

A Queer Story

The sick man started up in bed, resting on his elbow, and scanned the young aviator's face.

"Ted Scott!" he ejaculated tremulously. "Yes, by jinks, so it is! I've seen your picture heaps of times in the papers. An' you've come all this way to help poor old Andy!"

There were tears in his eyes as he sank back on his pillow.

"Yes," said Ted gently. "And I'd have come a good deal farther to help the brother of James Wilson, to whom I owe so much. But now don't excite yourself. I'm going to see you through this thing, whatever it is, that's troubling you."

"It's mighty good of you," quavered the old prospector. "I was jest gittin' to the point when it didn't seem that I had a friend on earth. Nothin' left to do but die an' be dumped in the grave."

"Nothing like that, countered Ted.

"You're worth a dozen dead men yet, and we're going to get you on your feet in jig time. Now what's all this about the doctor and the nurse?"

"They're pirates, that's what they are!" cried Andy. "They're tryin' to rob me of my fortune."

Ted Scott and Walter Hapworth exchanged glances.

"Not quite so loud," counseled Ted, with a warning glance at the door. "The nurse may come in at any moment and we don't want anybody to know what we've come for."

"Where is this fortune and how are they trying to rob you of it?" asked Hapworth.

"It's up in Alaska," replied Andy. "Heaps of gold nuggets that'd make your eyes stick out, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, maybe a million when they're all counted up. An' this doctor, Eklund, an' the nurse he's planted here are tryin' to git it away from me jest like I wrote in the letter."

"Suppose," said Ted soothingly, "you start at the beginning and tell us the whole story. Take your time and don't get excited. If you can't tell it all to-day, you can finish to-morrow. We must know everything if we're to be put in a condition to help you."

Thus urged, the old prospector started off on a long rambling tale. After prospecting a

good many years in the West, he and two companions had decided to try their luck in Alaska, from which many stories had come of remarkably rich strikes.

"They wuz good pals of mine, Bob Satterly an' Bill Hummel," said Wilson. "We'd had good luck an' hard luck fur more years than you could shake a stick at an' had always stuck together. Folks used to call us the Three Mosquitoes after those fellers a Frenchy wrote a book about. Before we went to Alaska we made an agreement that whatever any of us found there should belong to all of us in common, an' if any of us should die, his share should belong to the ones that wuz left. Poor old Bob an' Bill! They've gone over the long divide an' I'm the only one left."

He sighed and resumed his story. The three had encountered fearful hardships in that wild country, but finally had struck it rich in a place that they named Nugget Valley, because of the chunks of gold that it contained.

"We almost went crazy," said Andy. "We knew we had enough to make all of us rich for life. We cavorted about like wild men. But jest when we wuz feelin' that we wuz sittin' on the top of the world. hard luck took a hand in the game. Bob fell over a cliff an' wuz killed. Bill wuz chewed up by a bear. I killed the bear, but Bill died three days afterward. An'

there I wuz left all alone, with only them two graves of my old pals fur company!"

His voice broke and he remained silent for some moments. Ted and Hapworth, deeply stirred, said nothing, but their looks expressed their sympathy.

Wilson got control of himself and resumed.

"I could feel myself sickenin'," he said, "an' I knew if I once fell ill an' maybe be out o' my mind, I'd sholy die up there alone in the cold. So I made a careful map of the valley and cached the nuggets where no one but myself could find 'em again. Then I struck out fur some place where I could be taken care of, if I gave out. Them nuggets are up there yit, all except a few I brought along to pay my expenses. I wuz afeerd to bring 'em all along, because if I got sick an' out of my mind I couldn't defend 'em, an' I'd sholy be robbed of 'em. I figgered that when I once got well an' strong ag'in, I'd go up there an' bring 'em all out."

He went on in his rambling way to tell how he had reached the Yukon and made his way to Seattle. From there he had come to Denver to see a relative of Bill Hummel's only to find that the relative had died. In that city the long-threatened illness had come upon him, and he had been conveyed to the hospital in which he was now lying.

Ted Scott and Walter Hapworth listened with the closest attention, putting in a question here and there, but in the main letting Wilson tell the story in his own way. It had been told sincerely and with a wealth of circumstance that carried conviction. If Andy Wilson were not telling the truth, he certainly was a very gifted romancer.

But now they were coming to the nub of the mystery, the thing that seemed more incredible than anything else—the alleged plot to strip Andy of his fortune.

Miss Barclay came in just then and fluttered over to the bed.

"I mustn't let my patient get too tired," she said smilingly.

"I ain't tired," said Andy. "It's doin' me a lot of good to talk to these good friends of mine."

"No doubt," returned the nurse. "But we mustn't overdo it. I'll give you just ten minutes more," she said, shaking her finger with mock severity at the visitors.

"She's a nice, purty little girl," remarked Andy, as the nurse turned and left the room. "She ain't like that Bandmann woman, drat her!"

"What's the matter with the Bandmann woman, as you call her?" asked Ted.

"There's everything the matter with her,"

growled Andy. "She's as sour as vinegar, an' then, too, she's a crook."

"Do you know that, or are you just guessing?" asked Hapworth.

"Course I ain't got what you could call proof," returned Andy. "But I'm dead certain she's in cahoots with the doctor to do me dirt. I ain't got much book learnin', but I'm used to sizin' up folks, an' I ain't so dumb that I can't put two and two together."

"Well, now, we're getting to the thing that has puzzled us," said Ted. "You say the doctor and the nurse are trying to rob you. But how can they do it when your gold is up in Alaska, a thousand and more miles away?"

"I wuz comin' to that," replied Andy. "You see, it wuz this way. After I came here I talked to a number of folks about the strike I'd made in Alaska. S'pose I ought to have kept my mouth shet, but I wuz lonely an' had to talk about somethin'. Nobody paid much attention to me though till this here doctor, Eklund his name is, got kind o' interested an' pumped me a lot about it."

"Rather risky telling all those things to a stranger," commented Hapworth.

"Course it wuz," admitted Andy. "I kin see that now. But who'd think that a doctor would take advantage of a sick man? Anyway, the long an' short of it wuz that he got all

the points about the nuggets, an' he seemed to believe that I wuz givin' it to him straight.

"Then, a little while after, he told me that he had a friend that wuz a promoter or somethin' like that, a feller that would be willin' to outfit an expedition to go to Alaska to git the nuggets fur me an' would only charge ten per cent. commission fur doin' it. Said he'd known the feller fur a long time an' he wuz as straight as a string. What he should have said wuz that he wuz as crooked as a corkscrew," added Andy bitterly.

Light was breaking on Andy Wilson's two listeners.

"Go on," urged Ted eagerly.

"So the doctor brung the feller here," Wilson continued. "Foster, Cornwall Foster, doc said his name wuz, an' he wuz a slick article. Smooth as oil. Wanted to see the map I'd drawn, an' like the dratted fool I wuz, I showed it to him. Said he'd have to take it away to study it, but would bring it back the next day. Since that time I ain't seen hide nor hair of him."

"How long ago was that?" asked Ted.

"About six weeks," replied Andy. "I've spoke to the doctor an' he's stalled about it, sayin' his friend was all right an' probably wuz hustling round to git the money fur the expedition. But I got a hunch that that feller

has already gone to Alaska an' maybe has found the nuggets by this time an' I'll never git a smell of 'em. But you can bet the doctor will get his rake-off."

"Have you any contract with this Cornwall Foster, any writting to show that you're the owner of the nuggets and that he was acting as your agent?" asked Hapworth.

"Not a thing," replied Andy. "We wuz goin' to draw that up when he brung back the map to me."

Ted and Hapworth looked at each other. It was amazing how easily the simple-hearted old prospector had been tricked by an oily scoundrel—probably a pair of scoundrels, if the doctor was in on the deal, as seemed almost certain.

The conspirators had the map. That was all they wanted. Why should they take ten per cent. of the value of the nuggets when the whole hundred per cent. was in their hands? They could claim that they had been mining in Alaska and found the nuggets in the ordinary course of prospecting. Who could prove otherwise? Not a scrap of paper was in existence to prove Wilson's claim.

No he would never see Foster again—not if Cornwall Foster saw him first. Andy Wilson had been stripped clean, without a shadow of redress.

"I kept hopin' I'd soon be strong enough to get out of this bed an' on my way to Alaska," went on Wilson. "I figgered that maybe I could git to the nuggets while this skunk Foster wuz tryin' to locate 'em. But I can't git strong enough to stand on my feet. Week after week it's the same way. It ain't natural. An' why don't I git better? Because the doctor doesn't want me to. He wants to keep me here till Foster has made his haul. So he dopes me and keeps me weak. An' the nurse is in with him. He's bribed her to help the game along. I know by the way they whisper together that they're both in on it."

It was a staggering picture of rascality that the old prospector drew. Still, it was quite possible that it was true. Admitting that Foster was searching for the gold, it was of the first importance that Andy Wilson should be kept on his back until the plan was successfully carried out. And with doctor and nurse in league with each other, it would be the easiest thing in the world to do.

On the other hand, it was hard to believe that a doctor and a nurse, both with good reputations or they would not be in this hospital, could so flagrantly disregard the ethics of their professions.

Perhaps, if their side of the story was heard, it would put a different complexion on mat-

ters. Many things that looked suspicious might be found to be wholly innocent. Perhaps the doctor himself had been duped by Foster and was as distressed about it as Wilson himself. Perhaps Andy's weakness was natural and refused to yield to treatment.

Miss Barclay came in, shaking her finger at them.

"Going to throw us out?" asked Ted, smiling.

"I hate to," replied Miss Barclay, and as far as Ted was concerned she probably did. "But you really must go now. You can come again to-morrow."

Regretfully Ted Scott and Walter Hapworth rose to go.

CHAPTER VIII

The Unseen Watchers

Ted Scott put his hand on Andy Wilson's shoulder.

"Good-by, Mr. Wilson," he said. "Keep your courage up and remember that we're with you to the finish. We'll be in to-morrow again without fail, and then we'll get right down to cases."

"Good-by," said Andy. "I'll be looking for you."

They bade a cordial farewell to the pretty nurse.

"Do you know, Mr. Browning, I have the queerest feeling that I've seen you somewhere before?" she dimpled. "Your face is so familiar. But of course I haven't."

"That was my misfortune," said Ted gallantly.

"Oh, I know now!" she exclaimed. "It's because you look exactly like Ted Scott, the famous flyer. No wonder I thought I'd seen you before. Of course I've seen his picture hun-

dreds of times. I've got one framed in my room."

Hapworth coughed violently.

"My friends have told me that I resemble him," replied Ted. "Well, good-by, Miss Barclay, and thank you very much."

Hapworth grinned at Ted as they stood on the steps of the hospital.

"Congratulations, old man," he said. "You sure made a hit."

"Quit your kidding," laughed Ted. "I told you once that I ought to get a set of whiskers. But I can't think of anything else just now but the story Andy Wilson's told us."

"Great tale, that, Ted," said Hapworth. "Tell me straight now what you think of it."

"I think for one thing that Andy Wilson is absolutely on the level," returned Ted.

"So do I as far as the nuggets are concerned. But these suspicions of the doctor and the nurse. Think there's any foundation for them?"

"They seem rather far-fetched, of course," admitted Ted thoughtfully. "Still, we've learned by experience that stranger things are happening every day. They may be true."

"Pretty serious charges to bring against a reputable physician and a supposedly reputable nurse," observed Hapworth.

"Of course. I've been thinking the same

thing myself." Ted broke off and looked about him uneasily.

"Let's go to some place where we can talk for a few minutes without being interrupted," he suggested. "This thing requires quick action."

"My idea exactly," his friend agreed.

They found a small restaurant near by that was almost deserted, as the noonday rush had not begun. It was not much of a place, in no way appetizing, but they were in no mood to be particular.

"Well, Ted, what'll you have?" queried Hapworth, as he picked up the menu card.

"Ham and eggs and coffee," replied Ted. "I haven't time to do much choosing."

"Make it double," Hapworth ordered of the waiter.

The man nodded and went off, threading his way among the tables.

"Now, Walter," said Ted, when they were eating their meal, "open up that think tank of yours. What are we going to do about Andy Wilson?"

"Search me. You have some plan of your own," said Hapworth, looking keenly at his friend. "I can see it sticking out all over you, Ted. Come clean."

"As a mind reader you'd make a good horse thief, Walter," retorted Ted. "The only plan

I have in mind just now is what you have undoubtedly thought of yourself—that we keep a sharp eye on this doctor and nurse and find out what's going on."

"Play the detective, yes," mused Hapworth thoughtfully. "That of course is desirable, but it takes time. And if this fraud is actually being perpetrated on the old fellow, we can't spare much time, or it will be too late to help him at all."

"I know it," admitted Ted. "But I don't see how we can do much till we get the goods on the doctor."

"We might get a new nurse for the patient."

"We could hardly discharge the one he has now without giving some reason for it," Ted pointed out.

Hapworth nodded.

"You're right, of course. But in the meantime while we're waiting——"

"Foster and his gang will have a chance to make off with poor old Andy's pile of nuggets," Ted finished for him. "I know all that, Walter. But the doctor's got to be our first target."

"All right. How are you going about it?" challenged Hapworth.

"I have a plan. Maybe it's a rotten one. So if you have a better one, sing out. Did you notice that there was a big closet in Andy's room?"

"I did."

"Well, from what Andy dropped in that disjointed talk of his this morning, we learned that the doctor usually makes his daily visit at about two in the afternoon."

"What of it?"

"My plan is for one of us to slip into that closet shortly before the time the doctor makes his visit," said Ted. "A private conversation," he added, with a grin, "between the doctor and his nurse might be enlightening."

Walter returned the grin.

"I believe you," he said. "The greatest difficulty, I suppose, would be in entering that closet unobserved."

"Undoubtedly. But with a bit of luck it's not impossible. Such things have been done times without number. Why couldn't one of us put it across?"

"Which one?"

"That depends. I know it seems selfish to want to do it myself. I know you'd get a great big kick out of it. But this Andy Wilson being my special problem——"

"What's the matter with both having a hack at it?" interrupted Hapworth. "Two heads are better than one——"

"So are two pairs of fists, if it should come to a scrimmage," Ted returned. "O.K., then. We'll chance it together."

They strolled about until it was nearly two o'clock and then turned back to the institution.

Luck was with them from the moment they entered the hospital. The woman at the information desk had left her post for a moment, and they went nonchalantly along to the staircase, ignoring the elevator.

A visitor with reddened eyes passed them on her way to the lower floor, but did not appear to notice them.

They reached the third floor and started along the corridor. Suddenly Ted gripped Walter's arm and drew him around a turn in the hall.

"A nurse," he breathed, "just coming out of Andy Wilson's room. That must be Miss Bandmann."

A patient, taking his exercise in a striped lounging robe and flapping slippers, looked at them curiously.

"We'll have to watch our step or we'll be pinched," warned Walter, in a low tone.

A cautious glance assured Ted that the door of Andy Wilson's room was ajar and unguarded. The nurse's form was disappearing around a bend in the hall.

"Come along. Now's our time," whispered Ted.

Ted pushed the door a little wider and looked

into the room. There was no sound from the bed behind the screen, and they conjectured that Wilson was asleep.

Ted beckoned to Hapworth. The latter entered the room quietly leaving the door ajar as before. There was not the slightest sound from Andy.

"I bet he's doped," said Hapworth in a growling whisper.

Ted nodded.

"Come on," he said.

They crossed stealthily to the closet.

Ted pulled the door open and saw to his disappointment that the compartment held few articles for anyone to hide behind. Garments hung dejectedly from scattered hooks. In the event of the door being opened, Ted and his companion would be immediately discovered and brought forth to judgment.

"Not so good," muttered Ted. "Still, we've got to take a chance."

"Here's hoping our luck holds!" murmured Hapworth.

They closed the door after them—and none too soon! Even as the latch clicked, they heard another sound.

Some one had opened the door of the sick-room. Some one had come inside.

Crowded close together in the closet, Ted and Hapworth wondered how long it would be be-

fore they would be discovered. They listened strainingly for sounds within the room.

Light footsteps approached the closet door, passed it, went on toward the bed.

There were several seconds of complete silence; then a groan from the patient and a soothing word from the nurse.

"Wonder what she's doing to him now," thought Ted, and unconsciously his hands clenched.

Through a crack in the door they could catch a glimpse of the woman's face. It was hard and calculating and the pale blue eyes had a frosty gleam in them.

She stepped out of the room for some purpose.

"Did you see that face?" whispered Hapworth. "It sure would curdle milk."

"It's the kind of face," Ted whispered back, "that would fit the kind of woman that Andy says she is. It looks as though she were capable of anything."

"I don't know that I'd go as far as that," remarked Hapworth, still in a whisper. "She isn't long on looks, I admit. But as to being criminal—well, that's something else."

"It isn't her features," Ted replied. "They might not be so bad if she'd cultivate a human expression. But the hard eyes and the set of the mouth!"

He stopped as the nurse again entered. Silence descended on the room.

The two concealed in the closet began to perspire. Heat and suspense combined to make them exceedingly uncomfortable.

After a while the sound of a creaking rocker told them that the nurse had seated herself and was taking her ease.

At what moment would she decide to come across the room and open the closet door?

That momentous question overshadowed all others. What would she do, what would she say when she flung open the door and discovered them?

Scream and alarm the hospital probably. An almost inevitable but scarcely desirable prospect!

The rocker creaked more loudly. Was the nurse getting up? Was she coming over to the closet?

CHAPTER IX

A Dastardly Plot

To the indescribable relief of Ted Scott and Walter Hapworth, the nurse did not come toward their hiding place.

The door of the room opened. This time the sound was aggressive, as were the footsteps that followed it.

"Well, Nurse," a gruff voice asked, "how is the patient to-day?"

"The doctor!" thought Ted and Hapworth.

Now their interest quickened. Perhaps an intimate conversation would ensue. Were they to learn something at last?

"Not so well, Doctor Eklund," the clipped tones of the nurse responded. "The patient has very little appetite. He does nothing but sleep. He ran a slight fever last night."

"Arrumph!" The doctor cleared his throat. "Let me look at the chart."

A sound followed this demand that was of decided significance to the listeners. It was the soft closing of the sickroom door.

"Ah!" thought Ted, "that bit of professional conversation was for the benefit of anyone passing in the hall. Now they have closed the door and we'll get some real knowledge of the situation."

Listen! What were they saying now?

The doctor had lowered his voice. The accents came to them less distinctly and from farther away. Probably the doctor had taken his stand by the bedside of the patient. This supposition was confirmed a moment later.

"His pulse seems regular," the doctor said. "You have been very careful, nurse, in administering his—medicine?"

"Yes," was the reply. "But, Doctor, I'm—I'm——"

"You're what?" asked the doctor sharply.

"I'm beginning to get scared," the nurse responded. "If we keep him too long in this low, weak condition, I'm afraid he may pass out altogether."

"You leave that to me," said the doctor roughly. "I'll take all the responsibility. Besides, it will only be for the next two or three weeks. I may hear news any day that will make it unnecessary to keep up this—ah, treatment—any longer. Then we'll get him on his feet in a jiffy. You just keep your nerve for a little while longer. You're making more money

than you ever did before in your life, aren't you? What are you kicking about?"

"I'm not kicking," replied the nurse. "But —but——"

"But me no buts," commanded the doctor curtly. "I may hear from Foster, I may get the news I'm waiting for any time now, and the minute I do we'll stop this treatment. Now get me a glass of water. I'll make up this dose myself. I don't want to give you a prescription for the infirmary, because they'd keep the prescription on file and that might at some time be awkward."

The woman left the room for the water, and through the crack of the door the watchers could see the doctor taking some drugs from his bag.

No doubt it might be awkward—very awkward, indeed—if those ingredients were asked for of the experienced pharmacists of the hospital infirmary. They might be inclined to ask questions.

When the nurse returned the doctor mixed the drugs in the required proportions and rose to go.

"Give him a teaspoonful of this every three hours," he directed. "Now don't let me hear anything further about your being afraid. I tell you we'll soon be through with this thing,

and you won't have anything more to worry about."

The nurse made no reply to this, and after a moment the doctor crossed the room with his ponderous tread and went out, closing the door behind.

Boiling with indignation, Ted Scott and Walter Hapworth had all they could do to contain themselves. Each had a mad impulse to rush out and collar the scoundrelly physician and beat him to a pulp.

But they restrained themselves and remained in their prison, which was by this time stifling.

Had the nurse gone out with the doctor? For a moment or two the absolute silence seemed to lend itself to this possibility. Then they heard the clink of a spoon upon a glass. The nurse was still in the room.

They were on tenterhooks now with the desire to escape. There was no longer any reason for their staying. They had learned all they could—and that was much!

They were gasping for air. They were getting dizzy. Yet the nurse might stay in the room for hours.

Perhaps another half hour passed, and then to their immense relief they heard the nurse rise from her chair and leave the room. Instantly Hapworth opened the closet door.

"This is our chance, Ted," he said. "Let's get away."

"Just a minute," replied Ted. "We've got to get the evidence."

The glass of medicine was standing on a little table near the bed. Ted strode across the room, with Hapworth close at his heels, and seized the glass.

"What now?" asked Walter in a guarded tone.

"A quick getaway," answered Ted. "The sooner we duck the better."

He crossed to the door of the room and jerked it open. No time for caution now! In the event of meeting the nurse he would make a bolt for liberty, trusting to luck to preserve the precious contents of the glass. He would not surrender the evidence so hardly won without a fight.

However, they saw nothing of the nurse as they stepped into the corridor. They hurried along, Ted slipping the glass, which was not a very large one, into an outside coat pocket. He kept his hand over the top of it to prevent spilling.

A check was put upon his speed by the necessity of guarding the contents of the glass, and it was with apparent nonchalance but with inward fuming that both he and Hapworth sauntered along the lower hall and past the friendly doorman.

"What's the next move, Ted?" queried Hapworth, when they found themselves at last in the street.

"To put several good city blocks between us and that nurse with the frozen face," returned Ted. "I hate to think what will happen in that hospital room when she discovers that the glass is missing."

Hapworth chuckled.

"Too bad we can't see it," he remarked. "It would be a show worth a big price of admission."

A sharp exclamation from Ted drew Walter's glance to him.

"What seems to be wrong?" he asked.

"Some of this liquid has spilled," replied Ted, with a grimace. "It's leaking through my pocket."

Hapworth chuckled again and Ted grinned reluctantly.

"You seem to be getting a lot of fun out of this," he remarked.

They had paused opposite a drug store. Ted's wandering gaze rested on its window. He crossed the street with his companion.

"At least I can get an empty bottle in here that'll be a little handier to carry than this glass," Ted observed.

The young man behind the counter evinced considerable interest when Ted drew from his

pocket the now only partially filled glass.

He produced a bottle at Ted's request and filled it with the liquid by means of a funnel. Evidently, young men who carried glasses of water in their coat pockets were rare in the life of the drug clerk. He regarded Ted with curiosity.

"Want a label on it?" he asked.

"No," returned Ted. "The fact is, I'd like that liquid analyzed. If you know where I can have that done——"

"You've come to the right shop," replied the young man briskly. "My boss is a dandy chemist and makes a specialty of analyses. Shall I call him out or will you go right into the laboratory?"

Still haunted by the thought that the grim-faced nurse might burst into the shop and point an accusing finger at him, Ted said that he preferred the laboratory.

The clerk led the way and Ted found himself face to face with a small, gray-haired, near-sighted man, who peered at him and mildly demanded his business.

The clerk produced the bottle of liquid and handed it over with a flourish.

"An analyzing job, boss," he said, and went back into the shop.

The chemist turned the bottle of clear liquid around in his fingers. He took out the cork and

sniffed at it. Then he shook it gently and peered over the rim of his spectacles at Ted and his companion.

"Want it analyzed, do you?" he asked. "Can't do it to-day. Too busy. Come around day after to-morrow—let's see, that's Thursday—and I'll give you the report."

Realization of what delay might mean to Andy Wilson made Ted speak more vehemently than usual.

"Day after to-morrow may be too late. For all I know, this may be a matter of life and death."

The chemist was plainly impressed. He took off his glasses, polished them, and put them on again. He coughed gently, as though deploring the young man's vehemence.

"My dear sir! You astonish me. A matter of life and death, you say? Well, well!"

He regarded the bottle long and thoughtfully, as though he hoped to read its secret with the naked eye. He sniffed at it again and held it up to the light.

"It is really of the utmost importance that we know the contents of the bottle at once," Ted persisted.

"To-night," said the chemist firmly. "To-night is the best I can do. Come back at eight o'clock, and I will have the report ready for you then."

Ted thanked the queer old fellow, waited while a label bearing his assumed name of Browning was clapped on the bottle, then left the shop with Walter Hapworth.

"We've several hours to kill before we can know anything definite," suggested the young aviator. "What do you say to going out to the field and looking over the old bus?"

Hapworth assented with enthusiasm.

"Maybe we can get in a short flight before dinner," he observed hopefully.

"Nothing like it to give a fellow an appetite," laughed Ted.

However, for once their minds were too much engrossed to get their usual satisfaction out of the spin. They remained only a short time in the air and returned to their hotel before six o'clock.

They dallied as long as they could over their dinner, but even at that reached the drug store a good half hour too early for their appointment. They walked about the streets until eight o'clock and entered the store together.

The chemist was in the laboratory at the back. He looked up as the young men entered.

"Well, sir, what did you find?" asked Ted eagerly.

CHAPTER X

Brought to Book

"Come for your report, eh?" grunted the chemist in reply to Ted Scott's question, deeply absorbed in other work at the moment. "Well, here it is."

He handed a sheet of paper to Ted, which the latter perused eagerly with Hapworth standing close to him and reading over his shoulder.

However, the report, intelligible as it might be to the chemist, conveyed no meaning to Ted and his friend. They struggled vainly with the resounding, unfamiliar, technical terms.

"What do you make of it, Walter?" asked Ted in a low tone.

Hapworth shrugged.

"Better ask the doctor. He knows."

"We admit our ignorance, sir," said Ted, with a smile. "We can't quite get the meaning of these chemical terms. Won't you please explain them to us?"

"Eh? Oh, the report! Well, give it to me."

The old man settled his glasses on his nose,

cleared his throat and interpreted in everyday English the hieroglyphics on the sheet. When he had finished, the young men were left in no doubt as to the deadly quality of the innocent-appearing fluid that was to have been administered to Andy Wilson.

"The drug, if given in sufficient quantities, would cause death, do I understand you to say, Doctor?" queried Ted.

"Without doubt. It is one of the deadliest of drugs. However," the chemist continued, warming to his subject, "in the vial you gave me for examination there was not enough of the drug to cause death."

"Just what would be the effect on the patient of the quantity of drug the vial held?" asked Hapworth.

"The drug was present in sufficient amount to cause unconsciousness," was the reply. "I should say that the treatment, if extended over a considerable period, would tend to weaken the patient, destroy his vitality, and might eventually cause death from exhaustion."

"You would not prescribe such a treatment for your own cases, would you, Doctor?" asked Ted Scott.

"I take no cases," the chemist returned shortly. "I am not a physcian, though called 'doctor' by courtesy."

"But if you were practicing, would you in

any case prescribe such treatment?" persisted Ted Scott.

The chemist regarded him intently over his spectacles for a moment.

"No, I should not," he said finally. "What is more, no man even remotely acquainted with the drug would dream of doing so—much less a reputable physician."

Ted paid the fee and thanked the chemist for his trouble.

"You keep a copy of this report, I suppose?" he asked.

The chemist assented with a nod.

Ted folded the valuable slip of paper, placed it carefully in his pocket, nodded to Hapworth, and they left the shop.

Once in the street and free from the danger of prying eyes and listening ears, Ted Scott turned to his friend.

"Well, I guess this just about proves Andy's suspicions. Tell me it wasn't a lucky break, our getting hold of that glass of water!"

"Lucky for Andy, that's sure," returned Hapworth gravely. "It makes my blood boil to think of that poor old fellow lying there helpless at the mercy of those conscienceless crooks."

"We've got to get busy and change things, Walter."

"You've said something. But how?"

"Well, we have the proof, haven't we?" Ted slapped the pocket containing the chemist's report. "The first thing to do is to turn the spotlight of publicity on this doctor and his crooked nurse. I have an idea they won't be comfortable in the glare."

"But suppose the doctor denies everything? He has his reputation to protect, you know. I guess a few more lies in his life won't make much difference to him."

"But there's the chemist's report on the contents of the bottle."

"Exactly. But what's to prove that the stuff we took to the chemist in the bottle was the same that we snatched off the stand by Andy's bed? Nothing except our word. Against that would be Eklund's blank denial and the improbability of his having done anything of the kind. Remember that there's no prescription on file. The doctor made up the stuff himself."

"I suppose you're right," admitted Ted reluctantly. "It may be hard to fasten anything on this fellow. But we'll give him a big scare, anyway. And whether we can punish him or not, we'll certainly yank Andy out of his care. He won't have any further chance to poison him."

It was agreed that on the following morning they would bring things to a crisis.

They were at the hospital as soon as it was

open for visitors. Ted had thought out his course of action, so that there was no hesitation in his movements.

He asked at once for the head physician in charge of the institution, and was shown promptly to his office.

The doctor was a busy man, but he greeted his early morning visitors courteously and asked them to state their business.

"It's a rather unpleasant business, Doctor, and I'm sorry to have to bring it to you," Ted began. He drew the chemist's report from his pocket and handed it to the physician, Graves by name. "Will you read this, Doctor, and tell me what you think of it?"

Dr. Graves accepted the sheet of paper and examined it in a puzzled way.

"This appears to be a report of the analysis of a liquid containing a certain amount of deadly drug," he said. "You must pardon me if I say that I cannot understand what it has to do with me. I am a very busy man, gentlemen——"

"We realize that," said Ted gravely. "But this is a very important matter, one that may affect the good name of the institution——"

"What's that?" asked the doctor, straightening up in his chair. "No hospital in the city has a higher reputation."

"And deservedly too," said Ted soothingly.

"All the more reason why that high standard must be maintained. Suppose I told you, Doctor, that the liquid mentioned in that report was being deliberately administered to a patient by one of the physicians practicing in this hospital."

Deeply agitated now, Dr. Graves for the second time studied the report.

"I should say it was almost incredible," he replied. "But it can be readily ascertained whether any such prescription has been made up at the infirmary."

"You won't find it there," said Ted. "The doctor took care of that. He mixed the drugs himself."

"How do you know that?" asked Dr. Graves.

"I saw him do it," replied Ted. "So did my friend here, Mr. Hapworth. And I heard him tell the nurse to administer it to Mr. Wilson."

Very briefly Ted related the events of the preceding afternoon. He left out altogether the matter of Andy's fortune, as he did not want that matter to get abroad. He simply stated his belief that for reasons of his own Dr. Eklund, he believed, was trying to keep his patient from getting well.

The doctor listened with exceeding gravity.

"You realize of course that this is a very serious charge you are making?" he said.

"Perfectly," replied Ted. "I take full re-

sponsibility for it. I'm sorry I had to bring the matter to you."

"That is all right," said Doctor Graves. "It was necessary to protect your friend. You have done right to come to me."

He hesitated for a moment, then pressed a button beneath his desk. A nurse appeared almost instantly.

"You rang, Dr. Graves?"

"Yes. Is Doctor Eklund in the building?"

"Yes, sir. I think he is busy with an operation."

"Ah! Then it won't do to interrupt him just now. But leave word that as soon as the operation is over I would like to see him in this office."

"Yes sir. I think he is nearly through now."

"Wait a minute," said Dr. Graves, as the nurse was turning away. "Ask Miss Bandmann to report here immediately."

"Very well, sir."

The three waited in strained silence until footsteps were heard again in the corridor and the door of the office opened. The messenger reappeared.

"Dr. Eklund will be down in a moment, Doctor." She paused a moment. "Miss Bandmann has not reported for duty this morning."

Doctor Graves looked up sharply. Ted and Walter exchanged significant glances.

"What's the matter with Miss Bandmann?" demanded the doctor. "Is she sick? Has she sent any word?"

"No one seems to know, Doctor. The floor nurse is looking after her case."

There were sounds of other and heavier footsteps in the hall. The nurse was pushed aside and Dr. Eklund strode into the room.

He was a burly, powerfully built man, with jutting jaws and shaggy brows.

"You wished to see me, Dr. Graves? I was told that there was something important——"

The physician's voice broke off rather sharply as his roving eyes rested on the grave faces of Ted Scott and Walter Hapworth. A question shot from beneath heavy lids.

For a moment Ted could have sworn that there was fear in Eklund's face. So swiftly was the expression blotted out, however, by the heavy, masklike calm that was the ordinary look of the physician that Ted almost thought the impression false. Yet, in his innermost mind, he was quite sure that he had not been mistaken.

Doctor Eklund's voice was less suave, as he added:

"It must be something of great importance to call me from my duties at this moment. I've scarcely had time to wash after an operation——"

"The matter is of the greatest importance, Doctor Eklund," said the hospital head. "These young men," indicating Ted and Walter, "have brought a charge against you which I trust you will be able to prove unfounded. I hope there has been some mistake——"

"Stop!" thundered Eklund. "Charge, did you say? What sort of charge, may I ask?"

"He has decided to brazen it out," thought Ted. "Thinks he can get away with it, the skunk!"

Doctor Graves, not without a certain nervousness and attempt at conciliation in his manner, repeated Ted's charge that he was keeping the patient weak and ill, but without giving details of the proof.

"So!" the doctor placed huge hands on his hips and regarded Ted and Walter balefully. "I am to be insulted, I am to be outraged because of the rambling charges of an old man who should be in an insane asylum——"

"There's nothing the matter with Mr. Wilson's mind," interposed Ted. "Perhaps that's why you keep him drugged."

"Drugged!" growled Dr. Eklund. "What are you talking about?"

"Don't try to bluff!" said Ted. His dislike for the fellow showed plainly in his face and voice. "Doctor Graves omitted to tell you that we seized a glass of the 'medicine' that you

mixed for your patient and afterward had it analyzed."

This time there was no mistake as to the fear that shot into Eklund's face.

"Perhaps you would like to see the chemist's report," Ted added. With a word of apology, he took the sheet from the hospital head and handed it to Dr. Eklund. "I have it on the word of the chemist that no reputable physician would think of offering such a draught to a patient in Andy Wilson's condition."

At this point Dr. Graves intervened.

"I'm sorry to say, Eklund, that I agree with the chemist. That is why I hope you have some explanation——"

Dr. Eklund made a sudden gesture.

With a cry Ted leaped forward, but not quite quickly enough. Dr. Eklund had snatched the report and torn it into bits. Then contemptuously he let the pieces flutter to the floor.

"What nonsense!" he cried. "I would never order such a dose for a patient. The whole thing is ridiculous."

He turned as though to leave the room, but Ted slipped between him and the door.

"A pretty good bluff, Doctor, but it won't work," he said. "I can get a copy of that report from the chemist. And I can get the bottle and hand it over to Doctor Graves and

let him have it analyzed by some other chemist."

"You can get a bottle, yes," roared Dr. Eklund. "A bottle containing some stuff you've fixed up yourself and are trying to father on me for some purpose of your own. Go as far as you please, my young detective. You can't in a thousand years convict me of mistreating a patient."

He flung himself out of the office.

Ted turned to Dr. Graves.

"He's brazening it out in great shape," Ted said. "I've no doubt that I could have him put out of the profession and behind the bars, if I cared to press the matter. But I haven't time for that. After all I've demonstrated to myself that Mr. Wilson's suspicions are correct and that makes my path clear before me. I'm going to leave Doctor Eklund in your hands, Doctor Graves."

"You can do that with confidence," said the hospital head gravely. "I think you can be assured that he will not get off scot free for this abuse of his profession."

"And I would like to remove Mr. Wilson to another hospital," went on Ted. "There'll be no difficulty about that, will there?"

The physician shook his head.

"Not the least," he said. "Under the circumstances I think it is the best thing you can

do. I can't tell you gentlemen how sorry I am that anything of this kind should have happened here."

"No fault of yours, sir. We won't say anything about this outside. And we'll appreciate it if you cut any red tape and make it easy for us to get Mr. Wilson into another hospital."

The physician agreed heartily. The three shook hands, and Ted and Hapworth left the office.

"It makes my blood boil to let Eklund get away with this sort of thing," growled Ted. "I wish I'd taken a poke at him, just for luck."

"Don't worry. That man is in for a hard time, all right. He may even lose his license on the ground of malpractice. We haven't time to bother with him, anyway. We've learned that Andy Wilson's suspicions were justified and that he's going to be all right from now on. That's a lot to have accomplished in twenty-four hours. Say, Ted, can't you see that nurse beating it hotfoot after she missed that glass of dope? Bet she's shaking in her shoes now, wondering what's going to happen."

"Wonder if she notified Eklund."

"I think she was too rattled even for that," chuckled Hapworth. "It certainly seemed like a surprise party to Eklund this morning. They're a precious pair. Glad we're rid of them."

They went directly to Andy Wilson's room, where they found pretty Miss Barclay in attendance.

"Good morning," said Ted smilingly, as she answered their knock. "So you're on duty again to-day."

"Yes," replied Miss Barclay, turning the battery of her eyes upon the handsome young aviator. "Miss Bandmann hasn't reported."

"I don't think she will report," said Ted dryly. "How is the patient this morning?"

"A little better, I think," dimpled the nurse. "I haven't been able to find any medicine that Miss Bandmann left, but really he seems to get along better without it."

An almost imperceptible glance passed from Hapworth to Ted.

They bent over Andy Wilson's bed. His eyes were open and there was more strength in the handclasps he exchanged with his visitors.

Ted patted his shoulder.

"Good news, Mr. Wilson. We're going to get you out of here."

The prospector's worn face brightened.

"Say, that's the best news I've heard in a month of Sundays!" he ejaculated. "Listen, son, did you, did you find out somethin'?"

Ted nodded.

"Enough to get you out of here pronto. Walter will stay here with you while I make

arrangements to have you transferred to another hospital. I'll be back in a little while."

The transfer was effected with as little fuss as possible. Ted was lucky enough to secure a private room in the new institution, which had been vacated by its former occupant shortly before. Plans were carried out so expeditiously that Andy was established in his new quarters before noon of that same day.

The journey, however, and the excitement of the change had taxed the old fellow's strength considerably, and the new doctor that Ted engaged ordered that he should be kept secluded from all visitors for the rest of the day.

The next day, however, when Ted called up from his hotel, Wilson was reported to have passed such a good night that there was no objection to having his friends make a short call on him. But it must be very short.

On the way Ted bought a newspaper to look over in the taxi. Hapworth caught his arm and pointed to a picture on the front page.

"That face looks familiar," he said.

Ted glanced at it.

"Why, it's Brewster Gale!" he exclaimed. "Is it possible that they've captured that skunk?"

A disappointed expression came into his face when he found that the portrait was simply an incidental adjunct to an article reviewing the

whole subject of prison mutinies, including that at Janvier.

"Haven't found a trace of him yet," Ted remarked regretfully, as he finished the article and slipped the paper into his pocket.

At the hospital they found Andy Wilson eagerly waiting for them.

"How are they treating you?" asked Ted, as they shook hands.

"Fine an' dandy," replied the old fellow. "Exceptin' they won't let me talk. They keep hushin' me up an' tellin' me to rest."

Wilson reached for some water and was about to raise the tumbler to his lips when his eyes rested on the newspaper protruding from Ted's pocket.

"Great jumpin' coyotes!" he gasped. "That's him!"

CHAPTER XI

The Buried Nuggets

White and trembling, Andy Wilson sank back upon his pillows. Alarmed, Ted Scott made a gesture as though to ring for the nurse, but the old prospector's gasping appeal stopped him.

"No, don't! I'll be—be all right. Jest give me time to git my breath."

Perspiration beaded his forehead as he sought to dominate his weakness. Ted made another movement toward the bell, but Wilson's pleading eyes stopped him.

"Wait a minute. I'll tell you. I've got to tell you." His voice failed him, but his trembling hand pointed to the paper in Ted's pocket.

Ted pulled out the paper and unfolded it. Brewster Gale stared out at him. He exchanged a swift glance with Walter Hapworth.

"That's him!" Andy Wilson pointed with shaking finger at the newspaper photograph. "That's that feller Foster, the feller that's tryin' to rob me of my nuggets. He ain't goin'

to git 'em, he ain't!" Andy Wilson tried to sit up in bed and Ted pushed him gently back among his pillows.

"Now listen, Mr. Wilson," Ted said firmly. "You stop getting so excited or I'll have to call the nurse. The next time you try to get out of bed I'll call her. Understand?"

The threat of the nurse's tyranny had its effect on the old prospector. He relaxed in the bed, muttering to himself and glaring hatred at the pictured face in the paper.

"Now I'm going to do the talking," Ted continued. "All you have to do is to nod your head yes or no, as the case may be."

Ted paused, staring at the face of Brewster Gale. Andy Wilson gestured impatiently for him to go on.

"I take it," said Ted, "that you think this man whose picture is in the paper is the same one who was introduced to you by Doctor Eklund as Foster, the man who would help you to recover your treasure."

"There ain't no thinkin' about it," Andy broke out vehemently. "I know dog-goned well it's the same one."

"I thought I was to do the talking," Ted reminded him. "Do you want me to call the nurse?"

Andy subsided, glaring pathetically at the younger man.

"Seems like I got to talk or bust," he muttered.

"This fellow," Ted continued, indicating the picture of Gale, "is an escaped convict. He took part in a riot in Janvier State Prison during which a number of prisoners, including himself and his two sons, escaped. Practically all the others were rounded up later, but Gale and his sons are still at large."

"Do you know this skunk, Brewster Gale?" asked Andy Wilson.

Ted and Hapworth looked at each other.

"Yes, I know him," Ted returned grimly. "I have no reason to love him. I don't mind telling you that I wish with all my heart that he was safe back in Janvier Prison."

"That goes double," muttered Andy vengefully.

At that juncture the nurse intervened, coming from the hall. Miss Alston was a capable looking woman with a pleasant face and a friendly manner. Nothing more different from Miss Bandmann could be imagined.

"That'll be all just now," she said to the visitors, with a smile. "You know I warned you that this first call must be very short."

"But I've got to say more to these fellers," Andy protested. "It's dog-goned important."

"To-morrow you will be stronger," said the

nurse with pleasant firmness. "There has been enough conversation for to-day."

"In the meantime we'll be figuring out a way to help you in that matter we were speaking about," promised Ted.

"You dog-gone better," said Andy feebly. "I can't think of nothin' myself."

The next day found the old man much stronger. The nurse greeted Ted and Hapworth cheerfully on their arrival at the hospital.

"It's amazing how Mr. Wilson has rallied," she told them confidentially. "He must have a splendid constitution. He seems to feel so well this morning that I have all I can do to make him stay in bed."

" 'Rah for Andy!" laughed Hapworth.

Miss Alston smiled.

"Then it won't do him any harm to talk to-day, I presume," said Ted.

"I don't think so. Within reason, of course," Miss Alston added cautiously. "He must not get overtired."

Ted promised to be careful, whereupon the door of the sickroom was thrown open for him and his companion.

Andy greeted them eagerly.

"I'd begun to think you wuz never comin'!" he exclaimed. "An' me jest bustin' with things to put into words."

"Good," said Ted. "Go to it."

"Listen!" Andy clawed at Ted's sleeve eagerly. "You ain't told me the truth about Eklund an' that Bandmann woman. They wuz dopin' me, wuzn't they?"

Ted nodded.

"We had some of their stuff analyzed," he said. "It contained a dangerous drug. They were trying to keep you sick and weak."

Andy nodded, as though satisfied that his statements had been vindicated. There was a gleam in his eye.

"I knowed it," he murmured. "They didn't fool me, him an' that nurse. Not for a minute."

The old man's satisfaction was short lived. Indignation took possession of him. He sputtered in incoherent rage.

"The crooks! They would have killed me so that they could git my money. I'd have been best out of their way where I couldn't tell no tales. But I ain't dead, I'm alive an' I'm kickin' and I'm goin' to fool 'em yit."

He lay back on his pillows, and Ted held a cup of water to his lips, wondering if he should call the nurse. He glanced at Hapworth and the latter shook his head.

"He's all right," he said in a low tone. "Leave him alone. He'll be better with all this out of his system."

Andy stared steadily at Ted.

"I figger that this here hornet's got about six-weeks' start of me," he said in a quieter voice. "It's a long start, young feller—six weeks is."

"Yes," admitted Ted. "A six-weeks' start is hard to laugh off."

"But you could do it, young feller," said Andy Wilson, leaning forward. There was anguished pleading in the eyes of the old prospector. "A six-weeks' start ain't nothin' to a flyer like Ted Scott, the greatest aviator in the world."

Ted had guessed well enough what was coming. He hated to disappoint the poor fellow, but what, he asked himself, could he do under the circumstances?

"You want me to fly to Alaska in the hope of overtaking Gale and his party before they have a chance to find and dig up your buried nuggets?"

This was more a statement than a question, but Andy nodded eagerly, confirming it.

"You could do it," he persisted. "I've read in the papers that those airplanes kin cover ground so fast it makes your head swim. You could do it, Ted Scott. I heerd you kin run rings around any other aviator in the world."

"But I thought you said you gave your map to this fake promoter," said Ted.

"I gave it up all right, like you say. But

what's that got to do with your flyin' to Alaska?"

"A good deal, I should say," returned Ted. "Even though I should undertake this trip in an attempt to beat Gale to your treasure, I couldn't get very far without a map."

"Who says you'll need a map?" asked Andy testily.

"I do," retorted Ted. "Alaska is strange territory to me and of vast extent. How could I find a place without a map?"

The old man looked so crestfallen as he leaned back upon the pillows that Ted's sympathy went out to him.

"If you could draw another map—" he suggested.

The old fellow shook his head doubtfully.

"My mem'ry ain't too good at the best o' times. Bein' drugged ain't improved it none. No, I couldn't trust myself." He remained sunk in deep gloom for a few moments. Suddenly his face brightened. He looked at Ted slyly. "I can't draw a map. But I kin take you there."

Ted and Walter eyed the old man as though they thought he had taken leave of his senses.

"I kin take you there," repeated the old prospector triumphantly.

"You're a sick man," Ted pointed out.

"I wuz a sick man," amended Andy. "But

I'm gittin' better every minute. Ask the doctor if you don't believe me. I'll be well enough to git goin' in a few days, and a ride in that there airplane of yours will give me a nice change. By cracky! why didn't I never think of that before?"

Ted Scott's imagination kindled. Could there be anything, he asked himself, in this wild fancy of the old prospector?

"Do you think, once we reached Alaska, you would be able to point out the nugget cache?" the young aviator asked.

The old man indulged in a cackling chuckle.

"Kin I?" he cried. "Boy, I know that country inside and out. What my old eyes can't see my nose manages to smell one way or another. I'm like an old hound on a trail he's run since he wuz a puppy. I have a feel about that country you can't noways fool. Me in that airplane of yours'll be better than the map I give that slick promoter."

The old man's eyes shone. His hands trembled with eagerness. He glanced beseechingly from Ted to Walter and back again.

"You don't know what this means to an old man," he urged, as they appeared to hesitate. "My prospectin' days is over, boys. I can't go lookin' fur treasure no more, like I did in my young days. That pile o' nuggets me and my pals dug out, they're a heap sight more

than mere money. They're hopes an' dreams an' disappointments an' hard work that make my heart bleed to remember. They makes all the difference between bein' independent an' self-respectin' in my old age an' finishin' out the rest of my days on a poor farm, maybe, takin' charity. They're mine, them nuggets, boys. I've got to git 'em!"

The pathetic, impassioned appeal had its effect upon the young listeners. Ted Scott hesitated only long enough to ask:

"Are you sure you can find Nugget Valley?"

"Dead sure," responded Andy. "All you'll have to do is to foller the Yukon till I tell you where to turn. You can't fool me, once we get into the gold country."

"Things look different from the air," Ted warned him.

"Don't make no difference. I kin point out the trail to you. What do you say, boy? Will you do it?"

CHAPTER XII

Flying North

Ted Scott regarded Andy Wilson's weather-beaten, anxious face and smiled. He reached out a hand, which Andy grasped with surprising strength.

"I'll do it!" Ted cried. "If you don't recover your nuggets, it won't be because Ted Scott hasn't done his best."

Before he left the hospital Ted Scott encountered Dr. Dickinson, the physician now in charge of Wilson's case. When Ted stated his plans and hopes the physician looked grave. He admitted that the old man was much improved, but refused at present to take the responsibility of permitting such a trip as that contemplated.

"Wait a few days, anyway," was his parting remark. "If the patient makes as remarkable advances as he has in the last twenty-four hours the trip may not be an impossibility."

On their way back to the hotel, Ted and Hap-

worth considered the prospect that had been opened up by Andy's proposition.

"Things have been happening at a dizzy rate this morning," remarked Hapworth. "First, we find that Brewster Gale is Wilson's fake promoter, which in itself is startling enough. Do you think Gale's sons are in on this, Ted?"

"I think it's more than likely. The crooks would like to keep all the loot in the family if they could."

"It will be a great adventure, Ted. You don't happen to need a master mechanic, do you?" hinted Hapworth.

Ted jumped at the veiled offer.

"Gee, will you come, Walter? I was hoping you might, but was almost afraid to ask you for fear that your business plans would not permit."

"You don't suppose I'd let any plans interfere with such a chance for excitement as this, do you? I'll go if you really want me."

"Glory hallelujah! That helps solve part of my problem in the finest possible way. Now we need just one more good man, an all around flyer and mechanic who can fit in in any emergency."

"Any one in mind?" queried Hapworth.

"I've thought of Twombley," Ted replied. "Good old Bill would be just the man to take along on a flight of this sort. We used to pal

together, you know, when we were both in the Rocky Mountain Division. He's a splendid pilot, a dandy mechanic, and a scrapper from the ground up."

"Think you can get him?"

"That's what I've got to find out. He may be in Denver now. If not, I'll get in touch by wire."

The latter he did, and within a few hours got an enthusiastic acceptance.

"I'm there with both feet," wired Bill. "Will be in Denver to-morrow."

The news elated Ted. With two such tried and true lieutenants as Walter Hapworth and Bill Twombley aboard the *Lightning Streak,* his chance of success would be bright.

To add to his satisfaction, reports from the hospital concerning Andy Wilson indicated a steady advance toward health. The withdrawal of the drug gave his sturdy body a chance. Also, the prospect of setting forth in search of his treasure acted like a tonic on the patient.

"He seems to have grown years younger in the last few days," the doctor admitted, when questioned by Ted. "I think in his present condition it would do him more harm than good to try to hold him back from this expedition."

"Then when can he start?" demanded Ted.

"When will you be ready?" countered the doctor.

"We are ready now."

"Good. I'll make out the formal discharge. I'm getting tired trying to hold him in his room, anyway."

From this conversation Ted went direct to the flying field. In an elated mood he went over the *Lightning Streak* for the last time before the flight, examining it in every detail to make sure that all was in readiness.

The marvelous skill that Ted Scott had exhibited in all his flights, his comparative freedom from even slight accidents, the almost preternatural accuracy with which he reached his goals in the time he had set for his flights, had given rise to the legend of "Ted Scott luck."

But that "luck," if analyzed, would have been shown to consist in the great care and attention to detail that marked the beginning of all his trips. He never went up into the air without having made as certain as was humanly possible that his plane was in first class condition to do what was expected of it. Personally, Ted had no use for luck as a dependence, though he welcomed it when it came.

So now he went over everything from propeller to rudder with the most minute care. He examined the main plane external bracing, including fittings and struts, external wire cables, turnbuckles, and fabric. He tested the

exhaust manifolds and gave the engine a warming up to see that everything connected with it was functioning properly. He inspected the open control wires, the pulleys, and the hinges on control surfaces. He paid close attention to the landing gear, wheels, fittings and shock absorbers. He insured that the cowlings were secured and safetied. He saw that the propeller alignment was correct. The carburetors and fuel-feed lines came in for their full share of attention. For not only the success of the undertaking but the lives of four men depended upon the perfect functioning of the *Lightning Streak.*

The luck that had clung to Ted Scott for the last few days did not desert him on the morning set for the beginning of what was to prove an epochal flight. The morning was dazzlingly clear. There was no wind, nor could there be detected in the blue of the sky any hint of bad weather to come.

Ted hastened to the hospital to pick up Andy Wilson, while Walter Hapworth and Bill Twombley waited at the flying field with the plane.

The old prospector was in a state of great excitement. He was dressed and ready when Ted arrived. A small bag was packed with his modest belongings.

"I didn't know whether I could bring any

duds along," he said apologetically, as Ted's glance rested on the satchel. "I ain't up much on airplane etiquette, but I thought as how I'd like to take along a clean shirt and a toothbrush, the cap'n bein' willin'."

Ted laughed.

"We're all traveling pretty light, but we have a few pounds leeway," he explained. "There'll be room for your dunnage."

There was a handsome present from Ted to the nurse, and the old man left the hospital and climbed into the taxicab that the young aviator had waiting for him, unassisted. He scorned the help of Ted's hand, taking an almost childish delight in his newly recovered strength.

As they neared the flying field, Andy's excitement increased. He asked questions faster than Ted could answer them, sometimes answering them himself without waiting for a reply.

"That there's the field where the airplanes take off, isn't it?" he said, as the airport came in sight. "I always wanted to ride in one of the critters, but it never seemed likely I'd git my wish. Wonder what it feels like, anyway. Do you git dizzy? No, I don't s'pose you do. Seems like I heerd tell it ain't much different from sittin' in a rockin' chair, only it roars in-

stead o' squeaks. Cracky! There's an airplane! Looks right purty, too."

"That's the *Lightning Streak,*" Ted put in.

"You don't tell!" cried the old fellow. "Well, I've had mighty int'restin' experiences in my time, but I guess this one's goin' to beat 'em all. What's he stoppin' for? Got to git out? All right, I'm comin'."

In the last day or two Ted's identity had leaked out and he had been beset with admirers and reporters. But the secret of this flight to Alaska had been so well kept that there was no more than the usual number of pilots and mechanics about the field.

At the side of the *Lightning Streak,* Bill Twombley greeted his friend and leader.

"All set, Ted?"

"All set, Bill. Let's go."

With some difficulty they hoisted their passenger into the plane. He was equipped with a flying helmet and furnished with goggles. Hapworth assisted him into a leather jacket, fastened it snugly about him, and strapped on the parachute.

"Wrappin' me up like a mummy," protested the Westerner. "Hot as Tophet inside this here strait-jacket."

"You won't feel any too warm after we get started," Hapworth assured him. "Feel all right?"

"As well as I kin in this outfit."

Ted seated himself at the controls. Twombley started the propeller whirling, and the *Lightning Streak* started down the runway, lifted buoyantly into the skies, and turned its nose toward Alaska.

Ted Scott's eyes were fastened on the landscape ahead of him, but his vision went further than that. He saw the lonely stretches of the Yukon, the hills and plains of a little-known land, and somewhere, tucked away from prying eyes, a rich cache of golden nuggets.

"This is a race," he told himself grimly. "A race with Brewster Gale. I've got to reach those nuggets first."

In determining to outwit and outrun Brewster Gale, Ted Scott knew that he had embarked on no easy undertaking. In the first place, Gale had more than six weeks' start of him. While the trip by rail and boat and later on foot would prove a hard and tedious one for the crooks, Ted did not attempt to hide from himself the possibility that the ex-convict might already have reached the cache in Nugget Valley and departed therefrom with the treasure.

In that case the voyage of the *Lightning Streak* would go for nothing, except in the event of the flyers discovering Gale and his accomplices and forcing them to disgorge the loot.

But weighing on Ted's side of the scale was the possibility that the so-called "promoter" had not started at once for Nugget Valley.

Such a trip would require planning, the raising of funds, perhaps. It could not be undertaken in an hour or a day.

Then, too, there was the likelihood that, even should the rascals reach Nugget Valley, they would encounter tremendous difficulties in locating the hidden treasure.

Andy's map was probably crude; sufficiently plain to him, but confusing to a man like Brewster Gale who would not possess the experienced prospector's talent for "smelling out" gold.

"At best the race will be a close one," Ted summed up the situation to himself. "Barring accidents and always supposing that the *Lightning Streak* lives up to its name, we should be able to make it. Anyway, we'll make a desperate stab at it."

All that day the gallant plane raced through the ether at a spanking gait. Its motor settled to a steady purring rhythm: the miles swept by with amazing rapidity.

Not a cloud appeared in the sky, and though the wind freshened a few hours after the start, there was no sign in the weather to cause the pilot and his helpers the least concern.

Andy Wilson was as excited and happy over the experience as as small boy on his first visit to the circus.

"By cracky! isn't this the life?" he crowed. "All my life I spent diggin' in the earth when I might have been flyin' over it. Fifty-odd years have been plain wasted, you might say."

"The airplane isn't as old as that, Mr. Wilson," Hapworth reminded him. "So you needn't worry about having wasted all that time."

"That's so," the old man assented thoughtfully. "The airplane's a sight younger'n I am, an' yet look how much more it's done. I tell you, young fellers, the time's comin' when we'll stop runnin' the machines and the machines will run us. Seems like the world's gone mad nowadays. Somethin's bound to crack up before long."

"Likely enough," laughed Hapworth. "Perhaps that's what they mean when they talk of the crack of doom."

"But, oh, boy," said Bill Twombley, "what a heap of fun we're having in the meantime!"

CHAPTER XIII

A Wild Night

Ted Scott alternated at the controls with Bill Twombley while Walter Hapworth acted as navigator, taking observations from time to time and checking up on the instruments.

Toward nightfall, Ted relinquished the controls and went back to have a word with Andy Wilson. He found the old man sleeping as easily and contentedly as a child. There was a smile on his wrinkled, weather-beaten countenance.

"A great old boy!" Ted murmured to himself. "By his own admission, this is his first flight. Here he is a mile above the earth, flying through the sky at the mercy of the elements and the skill of a few people he never met until a week or so ago, and yet he can sleep as peacefully as though he were back in a hospital bed. He's a great old scout and a good sport, if there ever was one. I hope we can find his treasure for him. But whether we do or not, he'll be provided for as long as he lives."

The three aviators divided the night into watches of three hours each, turn and turn about.

Ted stood the first watch, and then relinquished the control to Walter Hapworth with instructions to call him if there was any indication of trouble.

How long he had been asleep before he was awakened by the roar of thunder and the sharp listing of the plane, he did not know.

He staggered to his feet, dizzy with sleep, and stared about him.

About the *Lightning Streak* the elements were waging a fierce conflict. The wind was so fierce that the plane was like a juggler's ball tossed about by the hands of a giant. Up and down it rocked, back and forth, dancing crazily to the wild discord of the gale.

Ted fought his way forward to Walter, who was clinging doggedly to the controls, his face drawn and grim.

"I was just thinking I'd have to call you," said Walter. "This is the kind of storm that demands that Ted Scott in person should be at the helm."

Ted took the seat that Walter relinquished, and set himself to the struggle with the elements.

A sharp blast caught the plane, forcing the nose down so sharply that Walter was almost

thrown to the floor of the fuselage. He recovered his balance with difficulty.

The wind was almost of hurricane force, and Ted pulled the stick and shot up into the higher reaches, thinking that there he might find quieter strata of air.

But the hope was vain, for it was quite as turbulent there as at the level he had quitted.

He reversed the process and darted downward only to find that at an altitude of a mere thousand feet the winds were in as wild commotion.

"Can't beat it, wherever I go," muttered Ted to himself. "It sticks to me closer than a brother."

There had as yet been no rain, but now this seemed to be imminent, as the thunder began to roar and the lightning to cleave the sky in great blinding sheets.

There came one report like that of a gigantic cannon, and the plane was filled with dazzling light. Simultaneously with the lightning flash came an ominous, ripping sound.

"Did you hear that tearing, Ted?" Hapworth shouted in his friend's ear.

"Only too well," answered Ted grimly. "Sounded to me as though lightning struck the plane."

Ted's keen eyes darted over the fuselage. Nothing had been struck there. The continuous

purring of the engine showed that the motor was functioning perfectly. The left wing, too, appeared uninjured. But it was when Ted's gaze rested on the right wing that a thrill of apprehension ran through his veins.

There was a crack in the further part of the wing and a little thread of scarlet running along the line of the crack. To his nostrils was also borne a faint smell of smoke.

"Call Bill," commanded Ted.

Hapworth roused Bill, and the latter was at Ted's side at once.

"What's up, Ted?" he asked.

"Plenty," replied Ted. "The lightning has struck the right wing."

Bill's bronzed face grew a shade paler as he looked at the smouldering crack and that little line of crimson.

"We can't land in this storm," Ted stated. "So that crack has got to be plugged while we're in the air. Hustle out some material and the kit of tools and then stand ready to take the controls."

"You don't mean that you're going out on that wing in this gale!" cried Hapworth, appalled. "Why, you'd be swept off like a feather. It's sheer suicide, Ted!"

"It's sure death for the four of us if that wing gets fairly afire," returned Ted. "It's got to be put out."

"But the rain may come down any minute," pleaded Hapworth. "That will put the fire out all right."

"But suppose it doesn't come until it's too late," replied Ted. "We can't take the chance of waiting. Besides, it isn't merely the fire that's got to be stopped. That crack has got to be plugged or the breach may widen under the force of the wind and the wing be so badly injured that the plane will become unmanageable."

"How can you put out the fire?" asked Hapworth. "You can't carry water enough."

"I'll beat it out with my hands," returned Ted. "Ah, here you are, Bill! Tie that kit of tools about my shoulders and fasten a rope around my waist, so that, if I do take a tumble, you'll have a chance to pull me in."

"Let me go, Ted," implored Bill. "I'm not worth as much to this party as you are."

"Good of you, old man," replied Ted. "But this is my job. Keep the plane as steady as you can, and Walter can hold on to the rope. Better slip one end about a stanchion so as to get a stronger hold."

The rope secured beneath his armpits, Ted crawled slowly out on the wing with the tool kit over his shoulders.

With luck, there was a chance that he might reach the crack and repair it before the wind

should tear him loose from the plunging plane and send him hurtling through space.

If he did, there was a chance that Walter could pull him in—provided the rope held!

Prone on his stomach, he inched his way along the wing, clinging with fingers and toes, flattening his body so as to offer as little resistance to the wind as possible.

The plane tossed and plunged, for, with all Bill Twomley's skill, it was impossible to keep it on an even keel. At one moment Ted's head pointed toward the earth, at the next his feet. At times the surface beneath him seemed to retreat altogether, giving him a horrible sensation in the pit of his stomach. He was grateful for the jarring thump that meant once more the contact of his body with the wing.

He had made about a third of the necessary distance when the clouds opened and the rain descended in torrents.

That settled one of his problems. Those sheets of water would put out the incipient fire.

But in solving that one problem it aggravated the other, for now an added slipperiness was given to the wing. It had been hard enough to maintain his grip on a dry surface; it was doubly hard now that that surface was wet.

A sudden dip of the plane sent Ted skidding

head downward over the surface of the wing!

Scrambling, slipping, he sought to save himself. His body was hanging half over the wing. Another moment and he would lose his grip altogether and go shooting through space.

He braced himself for the sickening dive, but at that moment the freakish wind struck the plane from another quarter, flinging it in such a fashion that Ted was thrown back on it and had all he could do to keep from rolling off in the other direction.

Ted hung on, hoping for a breathing space, a moment's lull in the gale. Given the shadow of a chance, his deft and strong fingers could patch up that crack enough to keep it from widening until they could make more complete repairs on the ground after the storm had passed.

Just then the plane did slide into a quieter current, one of those strange "air harbors" that had proved the salvation of many an airman in his extremity.

Ted took instant advantage of the boon and, though his muscles were sore and aching with the effort to keep himself alive, he reached the crack and worked at it feverishly until he knew that it would suffice to help the plane outride the storm.

He had barely finished when the plane again took up its wild bucking and plunging. The

brief truce with the elements was at an end!

Hanging on for dear life, Ted Scott made his way along the plane, a last lift of which fairly threw him into the fuselage, to be hugged by Bill and Walter, almost crazed with relief and delight.

"I feared you were gone, Ted," said Hapworth in a voice that shook. "How you ever managed to hold on beats me."

"Me, too," replied Ted, with a weary grin. "But I fixed the break."

"Yeah, you would," returned Bill. "But no one else on earth would have got away with it."

For another hour the storm kept up with unbridled fury. The mended place in the wing held securely. Then the gale gradually subsided, and dawn found the *Lightning Streak* riding easily before a moderate wind over the mountainous region of Canada.

Andy Wilson, who had slept through the turbulent stretches of that night, woke with the sun and confessed to a "dog-gone husky appetite."

The old man seemed indeed to have renewed his youth. He put away sandwiches and hot coffee with a dispatch and zest that aroused the admiration of his younger companions.

"At this rate, we're apt to run short on chow," announced Bill.

"That's all right," laughed Ted. "Go to it, Andy. When we get a little farther north we can drop down and shoot a bear or two. That ought to keep us in grub for some time."

Andy stopped munching long enough to peer with his faded eyes at the ground beneath.

"Jumping coyotes!" he exclaimed. "That looks like Canada. You don't mean to say we've got that fur already?"

"Nothing else but," replied Ted smilingly. "We're over the border and flying due north at the rate of a hundred miles an hour."

"Cracky!" exclaimed Andy in an awed tone. "Someone told me once when I wuz a kid about a magic carpet. Seems all you had to do wuz to step on it an' wish you wuz some place, an' presto! there you wuz without no more trouble than liftin' your little finger. Seems this here airplane's about as good," he added with a chuckle. "Right side or wrong side up, it sure gits you there."

CHAPTER XIV

In the Blizzard

The weather continued favorable for the first part of the day, and Ted Scott took advantage of it to make a landing. There he and Bill and Walter substituted permanent repairs in place of the temporary ones of the night before, and by the time they had finished the wing was again in perfect condition.

Then they were once more in the air. As they winged their way northward the temperature dropped steadily. But it was not the thermometer that Ted consulted frequently. It was the barometer.

"I don't like the looks of it, Walter," he said to his friend. "If we don't get snow before long, I'm a dub at reading the instruments."

"Looks like it, sure enough," assented Hapworth. "Still, we were sure to run into snow sooner or later."

"Later would have suited me better," replied Ted. "I'd like to have gotten a little

nearer the Alaskan border before meeting a blizzard."

It was after midnight, during his own spell at the controls, that Ted Scott's apprehensions were justified. The *Lightning Streak,* almost without warning, ran into a heaped up bank of snow clouds. In a moment it was the center of whirling flakes. A fleecy blanket enveloped the plane, giving a curious sense of isolation.

The snow settled on the windows of the cockpit, and Ted had to be wiping it off continually in order to see ahead of him. Even at that, he could scarcely see twenty feet in front.

Had he been in the path habitually followed by mail planes, he would have been beset with anxiety because of the possible danger of collision. But he was far out of their courses and that peril was negligible.

Still, it was a weight on his spirits to be flying blind. He might as well have had no eyes, except for the help they gave him in consulting his instruments.

Andy Wilson, who happened at the time to be in a wakeful mood, was delighted. It was quite evident that the old prospector was having the thrill of his life.

"Cracky!" he exclaimed. "Many a snowfall I've seen on the level, but I've never been flyin' through one before. Seems like magic, sort of."

When Ted turned the nose of his plane upward, trying to get above the storm area, Andy protested.

"I like it this way," he grumbled. "What's the sense of spoilin' a good thing?"

The snow fell steadily and with misleading gentleness. It was wet snow, the kind that clings and packs. Before long the wings of the *Lightning Streak* were heavily weighted with snow and lost their lifting power in part.

With every hour that passed the young pilot was compelled to consider the possibility of a forced landing. That prospect was one to shudder at, fraught, as it almost certainly would be, with disaster.

The compass and other instruments told the pilot approximately where he was and the direction he was pursuing, but he had no clear idea of the physical peculiarities of the land beneath him. For all he knew he might come down on a mountain peak or plunge to destruction into the depths of a gorge.

For hours the plane floundered through the wind and the snow of the blizzard, with ice, sleet, and snow pressing in still greater quantities on the wings. She was laboring like a waterlogged ship in a heavy sea. As Ted Scott studied his altimeter, he saw with a sinking heart that he was steadily losing altitude. De-

spite himself, he was being pressed lower and lower toward the earth.

Now he found himself fighting for time. If the plane could only be kept aloft until daybreak, he might conceivably find some suitable spot to land. Every ten minutes brought the dawn that much closer, and yet its coming seemed intolerably slow. Never would the light of day be more welcome!

Steadily the *Lightning Streak* was sinking and the young aviator had to call upon all his craftsmanship to keep it from going down altogether beneath the intolerable weight of the snow.

Walter and Bill had offered to relieve Ted at the controls, but Ted shook his head. As well might the commander of a ship leave the bridge when his vessel was sinking.

"What you boys can do is to lighten ship, though," he said. "Throw overboard everything that can be spared. We've got to keep this bus aloft till daylight, no matter what we sacrifice."

The sacrifice was made and the plane responded to the lightening of its burden. But what was thus gained in buoyancy was soon lost in the additional weight in ice and sleet.

Ted consulted his instruments.

"Eight hundred feet altitude," he mut-

tered to himself. "Not nearly enough. If a mountain rose before me now, I couldn't clear it."

A faint light hovered on the edge of darkness. The dawn was coming. But would it come in time?

"Shall we have to land, Ted, do you think?" asked Hapworth, as he saw the strained, anxious look on the pilot's face.

"There isn't any choice," replied Ted. "We can't keep afloat much longer."

Now, to add to his worries, one of the engines began to miss. The other motors still kept up their regular hum, but it was hopeless to expect them to carry the full load of the overburdened plane.

"Better let me jump with a parachute, Ted," suggested Bill. "That would lessen the weight in the plane by a hundred and eighty pounds and you could hunt me up afterward."

"No, old boy," replied Ted. "We're too close to the ground and the parachute might not open in time. We'll struggle on a little longer. You boys stand by to do what you can for Andy in case of a crack-up."

Now at last the laggard dawn was there. The darkness was yielding to its advent, yielding grudgingly, but yielding.

The snow was still falling heavily, but the

wind had died down. That at least was in the aviators' favor. It was one less adverse factor to be reckoned with.

Now at last the earth beneath was visible. One vast white snowbank, it seemed to be rushing up to meet the plane.

Ted Scott's hand tightened on the controls. He searched eagerly for one spot in that terrible white wilderness where he might land the plane.

He saw mountains rising snowy and vast above plains and valleys. He saw at last what his straining eyes ached to see—a possible landing place.

It was a precarious spot, a broad, plateau-like ledge high up on a mountain side. It had been protected from the blizzard by a heavy overhang of rock, and what snow had fallen on it had been swept off in great part by the wind.

The rocky plateau showed up almost black against the dazzling brilliance of the surrounding landscape.

If the *Lightning Streak* could be brought to rest there without striking that overhang of rock! If it could balance on the comparatively narrow ledge without striking its wing against the mountain side! Tremendous *ifs,* both of them.

Ted did not attempt to discount the awful

difficulties of that landing. He knew simply that it was his only chance and he must take it.

They drew nearer the ledge with alarming speed. Walter and Bill sensed what Ted was aiming to do and stood watching with bated breath.

"Cracky!" cried Andy Wilson, "you don't mean to say he's goin' to try fur a landin' on that ledge. Why, it can't be done! 'Tain't possible."

"Ted Scott's always doing the impossible," said Walter Hapworth grimly. "You just keep your eye on him."

They approached the frowning overhang of rock, seemed, in fact, to be driving straight into it.

"Lower, Ted!" yelled Bill. "Lower!"

CHAPTER XV

A Test of Nerve

Ted Scott did not seem to have heard Bill Twombley's warning. His eye was steady, his hands firm on the controls.

"We'll make it!" he cried exultantly. "We'll make it!"

They missed the overhang, grazing it by such a close margin that it seemed a miracle they lived.

The wheels of the plane were close to the ledge, closer.

"Swing her over, Ted! Swing her over!" groaned Hapworth.

"Cracky!" cried Andy Wilson. "Cracky!"

For a moment one wheel of the plane hung over the abyss. The drop below was straight down for hundreds of feet. Bill, Walter and Andy stiffened themselves for the awful plunge.

In that emergency Ted Scott's skill and courage did not fail. Unerringly he gauged the distance between the long wing of the plane and

the side of the mountain. A misjudgment of a few inches would have meant certain destruction. With masterly skill he swept to a standstill with the plane undamaged and the wheels on the ledge.

Then, the awful strain over, Ted Scott sank back in his seat.

Walter Hapworth came to Ted and shook his hand convulsively without a word. Bill pounded his back and almost cried when he tried to speak.

"Cracky!" exclaimed Andy in a dazed tone. "It ain't possible!"

The laugh that this created broke the tension. It was a tremulous laugh, but it brought them back to normality.

"You've been treated to-day to a typical Ted Scott landing," Bill Twombley said, with a grin that did not wholly disguise his agitation. "There were more thrills in that than in a barrel of movie films. There aren't so many that have a chance to see Ted Scott at his best. I hope you appreciate your good fortune, Mr. Wilson."

The old man's eyes twinkled.

"I do now more than I did a few minutes back," he drawled. "Then I wuz speculatin' as to who wuz goin' to find my bones in one of these here valleys next spring when the snows had melted."

"Well, now that we're not going to die for the next half hour or so," said Ted, "we'd best get the old bus in shape for a speedy take-off. This ledge isn't the safest place in the world. If a gale should spring up now it would send us all to kingdom come."

"Righto," agreed Bill. "I never did wish to live like an eagle in its eyrie. Level ground is good enough for me."

"And how!" assented Hapworth.

"Cracky! don't you boys never eat?" asked Andy. "I'm holler clean down to the toes of my boots."

"Guess we'd better break out some food, at that," said Ted, who suddenly awoke to the realization that he was ravenously hungry. "I could do with a bunch of sandwiches."

There was no taking time, however, for a formal meal. They took bites as they worked, for they were keenly alive to the peril that menaced the plane in the event of the wind's rising.

Andy, however, was privileged, and ate heartily and at length.

While Ted and Bill busied themselves with the engine, Walter climbed out on the wings and scraped off the ice and snow, relieving the plane of the burden that had nearly accomplished its destruction.

Andy Wilson expressed a desire to stand on

his own legs for a while, and the young men helped him out.

The engines were thoroughly gone over and tested. This done, Ted and Bill helped Walter Hapworth finish removing the ice that still clung stubbornly to the wings. A few minutes later Ted Scott viewed the completed work with satisfaction.

"Now I guess we're ready to go," he announced.

"It's a pretty tough place for a take-off, Ted," remarked Bill doubtfully. "One slip, and we're apt to be dashed to bits."

It was here that Andy Wilson betrayed nervousness for the first time. He looked at the narrow ledge that was only a few hundred yards in length; at the mountains that raised their towering crests on either side. He looked at Ted Scott buttoning his helmet more snugly, grim determination written on his face.

"Cracky!" observed the old fellow. "Looks like one of them mountains is purty nigh certain to git in our way. Reckon it might be a good idea to git out an' walk a way."

The suggestion was greeted by his companions with a shout of glee, and Andy grinned rather sheepishly.

"Well," he said, "if anythin' happens, don't say I didn't warn you."

Ted tried the engines and found reassurance in the restored rhythm of their song. He regarded the stretch in front of him and wondered if the *Lightning Streak* could pick up enough momentum in that limited run to lift her into the air. She would have to leave the ground quickly, he knew, to prevent a calamitous dive into the depths below.

But whatever private apprehension he felt found no expression in his face or voice or bearing.

"All set, fellows?"

"All set," came back in chorus.

A whirl to the propeller, and the *Lightning Streak* began her perilous trip.

Faster and faster, until the explosions of her motors filled the canyon with thunderous sound! Faster yet along that narrow path, one of her wheels at times so close to the brink of the ledge that it almost seemed to hang over it, a wing at other times so near to the wall of rock that it seemed to escape contact almost by a miracle.

They neared the precipice at the end of the path and the young pilot could feel the plane beginning to lift ever so slightly.

"Cracky! There's the end of it!" yelled Andy. "We're goin' off into space!"

The *Lightning Streak* soared from the ledge

like a bird, seemed for a moment to falter over the abyss, and then, under the compelling hand of her master, began to climb.

Up and up, while the stark bulk of the mountain reared above them like a towering doom! Up and up, while Ted Scott implored her to do her best! Up while the mountain seemed to rush to meet them!

One last burst of defiance from the straining heart of the plane, and the *Lightning Streak* leaped in triumph over the topmost peak and zoomed upward into illimitable space!

"Cracky!" yelled Andy Wilson. "I never did see sech a feller. Ted Scott, you ain't human!"

From that time on the progress of the *Lightning Streak* toward the Alaskan border was swift and steady. The plane gave a masterly performance of speed and endurance.

The weather cleared and stayed clear. Ted Scott began to cherish a very definite hope of reaching Nugget Valley before Brewster Gale and his confederates, or at least in time to prevent them from escaping with the treasure.

The cold increased as they got further north, but they encountered neither rain nor snow. It was a dry, bracing cold that they found exhilarating.

"This is too good to last," Bill Twombley

remarked the next day. "Trouble's piling up ahead of us, see if it isn't."

Bill proved too true a prophet. For twenty-four hours more their luck held. Then, after they had crossed the Alaskan border and were sailing triumphantly toward the Yukon, they ran into another snow storm.

Unlike the other, this came gradually, light flurries of snow with pauses between, during which the flyers drove through a leaden gray world, a world in which the very quiet was a sinister portent. The *Lightning Streak* hurtled through the air, blasting the silence with a humming like that of a giant wasp.

Ted Scott was of no mind to undergo a second experience like that which had so nearly proved their destruction. His weather sense told him that a heavy storm was brewing.

"We'll land now while we have some daylight left," he declared. "The storm when it comes may last all night. We'll fool it this time."

They came down slowly in a long easy glide toward the earth. When they were close enough to see some of the physical characteristics of the terrain, Ted looked for a suitable landing place.

He saw that he was above a wide level plain almost directly below, and toward this he de-

scended, each wide circle bringing him nearer to the ground.

"If that snow-covered plain is frozen hard enough to sustain the weight of the plane, we'll be sitting pretty," remarked Ted. "If not——"

"We're just plumb out of luck," Hapworth finished the sentence.

Under Ted Scott's consummate pilotage, the *Lightning Streak* floated down almost like a feather to a perfect landing. The wheels skimmed lightly over the bright surface for some distance, the ice offering little frictional resistance, then came to rest like a weary bird.

"Bully!" chortled Bill, as he with the others scrambled from the plane. "I was afraid we'd break through the crust."

"Br-r-r!" shivered Hapworth. "If this is a sample of Arctic weather, a little goes a great way."

Ted looked about at the desolate landscape.

"Let's scout about a bit," he suggested. "It would be a dandy thing if we could find some sheltered spot where we could make a rousing bonfire. Come on, let's take a look."

Andy, against the protests of the others, insisted on going along.

"I know this dog-gone country better than you do," he said. "I'll go along so that you won't get lost. If you wuz to leave me alone

in that there plane, I'm skeered it would git a notion to fly off with me. Better tote your rifles with you," he added. "No tellin' what you may come across in these parts."

A few hundred yards off from the place where the *Lightning Streak* had descended was a ridge of low hills. Toward these Andy Wilson led the way, pointing out that they might find some cave for shelter and that the stunted undergrowth would afford ample fuel for a fire.

They reached the ridge shortly and spread out a little to explore the sides of the hills for the shelter they had in mind.

A call from Hapworth sent the rest of them hurrying in his direction. His form was hidden from them for the moment by a huge, jutting boulder.

"Hi! This way, fellows!" shouted Walter. "I've found just the place we're looking for."

They turned the edge of the boulder and came upon a sight that froze their blood.

Walter Hapworth stood upon an ice-encrusted ledge of rock. Close behind him, and as yet unperceived by him, towered a gigantic kodiak bear!

CHAPTER XVI

Nearing the Goal

Ted Scott swung his rifle to his shoulder. But his action was no quicker than that of Andy Wilson. Two shots rang out so close together that they gave the impression of one report.

As Walter Hapworth whirled about, the bear staggered forward, mortally wounded.

With eyes already glazing, it slashed out instinctively with one of its enormous paws, the claws ripping the sleeve of Hapworth's leather jacket and lacerating the flesh of his arm.

Walter grabbed his wounded arm and backed away from the huge beast that had slumped to the ice-coated rock at his feet. A red stain appeared and slowly spread about the bear.

In two strides Ted Scott covered the distance between them and stood at Hapworth's side.

"Did he get you, Walter?" he cried. "Are you badly hurt?"

"I don't know. I guess not much," replied Hapworth. "But that was a narrow escape.

Another second and he'd have nabbed me."

He looked at the fingers of his left hand and found to his surprise that blood was dripping from them.

"Guess the old boy must have mauled me some, at that," he said. "Look at those claws of his, will you? They could rip a man's heart out."

"They wouldn't though. A kodiak bear'd much ruther hug you to death," put in Andy. He was standing beside the dead beast and regarding it with undisguised interest. "Right lovin' animals, bears are."

"Lucky for me you fellows plugged this one in time," said Walter. "I'd just found this cave," he continued, pointing to a yawning hole that seemed to extend some distance into the side of the hill, "but now I'm not so pleased with it as I was. There may be other bears in there waiting for us."

"It's possible," agreed Andy. "Still, just now we need this cave more than the bears do. We'll have a look, anyway. Hold your rifles ready, boys."

They advanced with caution, but found that the warning was unnecessary. The cave was empty and its shelter a welcome one, for the snow was now falling heavily.

The injury to Walter's arm was the first thing that required attention. This was found

to be more painful than serious, the arm having been protected by the thick tough leather of the flying jacket. Bill brought the medicine kit from the plane, and Ted treated the wound with antiseptic and salve and snugly bandaged it with gauze. When the job was completed, Walter declared that he felt quite comfortable.

The others set to work and soon collected enough brush and wood to keep a fire going through the night.

"Seems a pity to think of that bear going to waste," remarked Bill, as he gazed at the dead monster.

"It ain't goin' to waste," declared Andy. "I'll skin the critter enough to git some thick steaks out o' the flanks. An' let me tell you, there ain't no better eatin' nowhere."

With the dexterity of an old hand, Andy Wilson cut out an ample supply of the succulent meat and in a little while it was roasting on improvised spits over the fire.

They made a royal feast of the delicious meat, doubly so by contrast with the canned goods on which they had had to subsist since the outset of their flight.

"Them kodiaks is bad medicine," remarked Andy, as he sat smoking his pipe before the fire.

"They sure are sockdolagers, if this one we killed is a sample," observed Bill.

"They're the biggest bears in all America, an' the ugliest," replied Andy.

"Worse than grizzlies?" queried Hapworth.

"A heap sight worse," declared the old prospector. "I've fought with both an' I know. A kodiak could lick a grizzly with one paw tied behind its back. An' there's plenty of 'em in Alaska, so we've got to watch our step. I hate to think of what'd have happened to Walter here if them bullets hadn't found a vital spot."

The aviators and their passenger took turns at sentry duty throughout the night and kept the fire burning brightly.

Morning found them much refreshed, and Walter's arm, though sore when touched, had almost ceased to bother him. The snow had ceased falling and the sun was shining brightly. Their spirits rose in consequence.

They breakfasted heartily on bear meat and roasted some to take along.

"Come on, boys," said Ted. "Let's hop."

They reached the plane and set to work clearing off the snow and warming up the engine.

They took off easily and rose high into the air, whose frostiness was being rapidly tempered by the blaze of sunshine. They knew now that they must be nearing their goal and all were on the alert and thrilling with eagerness.

Two hours passed. Then Andy Wilson, peer-

ing through the powerful glasses that had been provided for him, called out joyously:

"Down there's the Yukon! Look, fellers! We're flyin' over the Yukon River!"

Instantly three more pairs of glasses were leveled at that gleaming world far beneath. There was the Yukon, sure enough, its tumultuous waters crowded with ice floes, showing like a long, interminable silver ribbon.

A wave of triumphant relief surged over Ted Scott. He felt that the most difficult part of the journey had been covered. Below was the Yukon. Somewhere not much farther on to the right or left must be Nugget Valley. Unless something totally unexpected happened to the mechanism of the *Lightning Streak,* they were now practically sure of reaching their destination.

Then came a sobering thought.

"What would they find when they reached the cache?" he asked himself. "A heap of golden nuggets worth a king's ransom? Or a looted hiding place with all the treasure gone?"

Ted turned to the old prospector, who was sitting close beside him, gazing eagerly downward.

"It's your turn now, Andy," he said. "I've brought you to the Yukon. Now you've got to show us Nugget Valley."

"I will," the old man promised. "Only

you've got to drop lower so I kin tell what the country looks like down there. My eyes ain't so good, an' from 'way up here things look sort o' different."

"Anything to oblige," replied Ted, smiling.

Down they went in a long spiral, while the earth seemingly came up to meet them. The effect of the sun on the vast expanse of ice and snow was painfully dazzling. None of them could keep his eyes upon it without frequent resting spells.

"There!" cried Andy, after an interval of some hours. "You turn off somewhere 'round here, boy. Nugget Valley's off to the east."

There was a note of doubt, however, in the old man's voice that gave Ted some concern. Would the prospector be able to make good his boast that, once over the Yukon, he could direct them without the aid of a map to Nugget Valley?

Some time later the old man cried out excitedly:

"Yonder's the valley! Jest over that range o' hills. I knew I couldn't be mistook. This country's like a book to me. Right over there behind them hills. That's Nugget Valley!"

The others caught the contagion of Andy's excitement and Ted sent the *Lightning Streak* sweeping over the mountain range with a roar and increased speed.

"There it is!" With a shaking hand, Wilson gripped Ted's shoulder. "Down there's the valley, lad; the valley I've been seein' in my dreams. Nugget Valley!"

The old man's voice was pitched high. His eyes were feverish. His agitation was almost terrible to watch.

"Lower!" he cried to Ted. "Lower! I can't see from 'way up here."

Down swept the plane, circling as low above the valley as the young pilot dared.

"It's the same an' yit it ain't. Them there hummocks is all new. Jumpin' coyotes! has the mountain slid down an' covered it up?"

The old man lowered his glasses and looked at the young aviator beside him through eyes gone suddenly dim.

"Looks like it ain't no use," he faltered. "Cache's been covered up by landslides. My nuggets are gone."

CHAPTER XVII

Over the Cliff

Consternation spread through the little company in the *Lightning Streak* at Andy Wilson's declaration.

Was it possible that this was to be the end of all the risks and perils that they had endured? Had Fate been indulging in a chuckle all this time at their expense?

Their glasses were focused on the spot that the old prospector had indicated. It did seem that there had been some convulsion of nature in that vicinity.

One whole side of the mountain in question seemed to have been sliced away. Rocks were tumbled in wild confusion. Trees had been torn from their roots, leaving gaping holes, and lay tossed hither and thither at the base of the hill. There was every evidence of an avalanche having swept down the mountain side.

Ted Scott was the first to recover from the bitter disappointment that had for a moment overwhelmed them all.

"How can you be sure from this distance that that is the place where you hid your nuggets?" he asked of Andy.

"Oughtn't I to know?" returned Andy. "Didn't Bob an' Bill an' me work these diggin's fur months before we found the gold? Ain't I looked at this here scenery until I got plumb familiar with every part of it? That's the place all right, an' I'll stake my life on it."

"All the same," returned Ted, "it's too early in the game to come to any conclusion. Even admitting that is the place, it doesn't follow that the cache has been covered by the landslide. And even if it has, we may be able to dig through to the nuggets. We're far from being beaten yet, Andy."

But the old prospector shook his head dolorously.

"I might have known there'd be a ketch in it somewhere," he groaned. "They's a hoodoo on that gold. Poor Bob got his when he fell into a gulch. Bill got his when he wuz chawed by a bear. Now I'm gittin' mine by a landslide."

"Brace up, Mr. Wilson," counseled Ted. "We may be happy yet. The game isn't over till the last man's out. I'll just look around now for a place to land, and then we'll come over to this place on foot."

"If we've been fooled, the Gales have been

fooled too," remarked Hapworth, trying to get what satisfaction he could out of that reflection.

"That doesn't follow," muttered Bill. "They may have had the luck to find the loot before the slide took place."

"Quit your croaking, old man," said Ted, as he studied the landscape to find a suitable place to come down.

In that mountainous region a landing place was hard to find, and Ted circled about for more than an hour before he found a spot five miles away that seemed to be promising.

"The best we can do, I guess," he remarked, as he swooped down for the landing.

He made it without too much difficulty and the party climbed out for the first time to stretch their legs on Alaskan soil—or rather on Alaskan snow, for the ground was deeply covered.

This, however, was packed hard and they found that they could travel over it without breaking through, although the going was slippery and more suited for skis than shoes.

"I think we'd better hide the plane," remarked Ted, as he looked about him. "I haven't seen a soul for the last few hours, but that doesn't prove anything. There may be wandering tribes of Indians that would like nothing better than to loot the plane. Too,

we have to keep in mind the possibility of the Gale crowd being in the vicinity."

There was a grove of spruce trees in the immediate neighborhood, and into this they trundled the *Lightning Streak,* covering it up with loose branches until one would have to stumble upon it to be aware of its existence.

They looked to their weapons and took along a plentiful supply of cartridges. They carried with them also a supply of food that would be adequate for a couple of days. In addition they carried a light coil of rope, which might be needed in mountain climbing.

Thus equipped, they set out in the direction of Wilson's cache, with the old prospector in the lead.

For the first two miles of their journey they found the traveling comparatively easy. The weather was cold, but there was no wind of any account and in addition to their thick clothing the exercise kept them warm—almost too warm for comfort.

In places the snow had been blown away completely by the winds and they traveled on the frozen turf. And here they found a strange phenomenon of Alaska.

In close proximity to the snow were long stretches of flowers blooming as radiantly as in summer. There were lupines similar to the Texas blue-bonnet growing in profusion. The

rosy lavender of the fireweed contrasted delicately with the snow. Iris of many varieties lent beauty to the scene.

At one place there were signs of ancient human habitation. All living occupants of a village had vanished, but there were mounds that betokened an Indian graveyard.

Certain singularities of this piqued the adventurers' curiosity. For there was no grave but had connected with it in some way utensils of human use, spades or cooking pans or children's toys.

"What do those things mean?" they appealed to Andy.

"It's jest one of the queer ideas of them Indians," explained the old prospector. "They kind o' thought that they'd need in the future world, in order to git along, the same things they used in this here vale of tears. See that pan an' that pot? Them's fur a squaw to do her cookin' with in the next life. On that little grave there is a baby's bone rattle fur the kid to play with. An' them snowshoes an old bow an' arrow mark the grave of an Indian buck."

Their way led them up a mountain side, and here the going was extremely hard. It taxed even the young men of the party to make their way over boulders and fallen trees. For Andy Wilson it was harder still.

Although they offered to help him, the old

prospector disdained assistance. He was sustained by an inner fire that brooked no thought of weariness.

"Don't you fellers worry about me," he said. "Andy's still got a shot left in his locker. There'll be time fur him to rest later."

When they finally came out on the summit of the mountain an exclamation burst from Andy's lips.

"There it is!" he cried, as he pointed to the slope on the other side of a narrow valley. "There's the place where Bill an' Bob an' me worked an' sweated to find them nuggets. We'll soon be there now."

Inspired by the nearness of their goal, the party hurried on. Their path led along the brink of a precipice that ended in a gorge hundreds of feet below.

Ted and Bill were making their way side by side when Bill slipped on a patch of ice and slid toward the edge of the chasm.

Ted Scott made a grab at him but missed. The next instant Bill Twombley had disappeared over the cliff!

CHAPTER XVIII

Above the Abyss

A shout of alarm broke from Ted Scott's lips as he saw his comrade disappear.

The shout was echoed by Walter Hapworth and Andy Wilson, who rushed hurriedly to Ted's side.

"Bill!" cried Ted in anguish. "He's gone over the cliff!"

He threw himself flat on the ground and crept toward the edge of the precipice. His heart quaking with apprehension, he looked down, dreading what he might see at the foot of that awful gorge.

But his pulse quickened with relief as he saw Bill Twombley, good old Bill, hanging to a bush that he had grabbed in his descent and that now held him suspended over the abyss.

He was hanging on with desperation, his feet swinging about, trying to find some toehold in the side of the craggy cliff.

Ted Scott tore from Hapworth's hands the coil of rope the latter was carrying.

"Hold on, Bill!" he yelled. "For the love of Pete, hold on!"

He made a noose in one end of the rope and handed the other end to Hapworth.

"Slip this round a rock to get a purchase," he commanded, "and then hold on for dear life."

Hapworth did as directed, and Ted let down the slack of the rope until the noose was dangling close to Bill's body.

"Slip it over one arm and shoulder, Bill," shouted Ted. "We'll pull you up."

To Ted Scott's consternation, there was no reply. Nor did Bill make any movement toward the rope. His face was ghastly white. His eyes were closed.

A pang of anguish stabbed Ted's heart. Bill was only semi-conscious. Perhaps he had struck his head in falling and was dazed. He could make no move to help himself. Only the desperate instinct of self preservation was prompting him to hold on to that bush with a clutch like that of death.

Instantly Ted Scott formed his plan.

"I'm going down," he said to his companions. "Hold on to that rope and pull up when I tell you to."

Before the last words had left his lips he was over the side of the cliff and letting himself down by the rope. He reached Bill's side and

threw his arm about his comrade's body.

"Listen, Bill!" he shouted. "You've got to help me. Wake up! Wake up!"

The frantic call seemed to penetrate to Bill's fading consciousness. He opened his eyes bewilderedly.

"I'm holding you!" shouted Ted. "Let go with one hand and slip your arm through this loop. Quick now!"

Bill obeyed mechanically and Ted slipped the noose over the liberated arm and shoulder.

"Now let go with the other hand and grab the rope," Ted commanded, at the same time relinquishing his own hold of the rope and grabbing the bush. "Pull up!" he shouted to the two above.

Hapworth and Wilson obeyed, and Bill's body, dangling over space, was slowly pulled to the top of the cliff.

Ted watched the body ascend with his heart beating wildly.

Had he made the loop secure enough? Would it hold? Would the strength of the two above —one of them an old man—be sufficient for the task?

Slowly, very slowly, Bill Twombley's swaying form arose until, with a feeling of indescribable relief, Ted saw it disappear over the top of the cliff.

But now a sense of his own peril assailed him,

for the roots of the bush to which he clung were gradually yielding.

The shock of Bill's fall had partly torn them loose. His weight suspended there had weakened them still further. Now under the burden of Ted's body they were threatening to give way altogether!

He could feel the gradual yielding, the snapping of one tendril after another, the sickening sensation of the bush sinking lower and lower. He knew it was only a matter of minutes, perhaps seconds, before it would give way altogether and he would be sent hurtling down to certain death on the rocks below.

"Hurry!" he called. "This bush is breaking loose!"

But the weight of Bill's body had drawn the loop so tight that it was hard to unloosen, and though those above worked with feverish energy it seemed ages before the noose again was lowered from the top of the cliff.

Ted made a lunge for it, but it swayed out of his reach.

That desperate lunge tore the bush away from its last fastenings. It gave way just as Ted reached for the rope on its return swing —and grabbed it!

He held on with desperation. He had no time to slip the noose over his shoulder. The strain on his clutching fingers was terrific.

This time the ascent was slower. The rescuers above had already been heavily taxed by the effort of pulling up Bill Twombley. Could they draw their young leader up over the cliff?

Another element was added to Ted's apprehension as he looked up and saw that several strands of the rope had already been severed by the sawing on the jagged edge of the cliff.

If many other strands gave way! But Ted Scott resolutely refused to consider what would follow.

Foot by foot, inch by inch, he was drawn toward the top. Up and up he went, ever so slowly, until at last his head appeared over the edge. Then he threw his arms over the rocky surface and helped swing himself to safety.

He lay on the ground panting, while Hapworth and Wilson, deadly weary but delighted beyond all measure, patted him and crooned over him. Bill, too, now wholly recovered, joined in the chorus of joy and relief.

It was some minutes before they regained control of themselves and could speak coherently.

"Gee, Ted!" exclaimed Bill, "that was wonderful nerve and quick action on your part. If it hadn't been for you, I'd have dropped into that abyss, sure. You saved my life!"

"Nothing but what you'd have done for me

if the situation had been reversed," replied Ted. "And if Walter and Andy hadn't put all they had into it, we'd both have been food for the buzzards by this time."

"Maybe we wuzn't skeerd!" put in Andy. "But we'd have dropped dead before we'd have let go that rope."

"We noticed the way the strands were breaking, too," observed Hapworth. "That sent our hearts into our mouths."

They rested for a full hour, as they were all too greatly exhausted by the mental and physical strain to proceed at once. Then they rose and resumed their journey.

They made their way down the mountain side and across the narrow valley that lay at its foot. With every yard they advanced the old prospector's excitement increased as he recognized familiar landmarks.

"I knew I couldn't be mistook!" he ejaculated. "Many's the time Bob an' Bill an' me traipsed over every foot of this valley. It's Nugget Valley, all right. Now if the nuggets is only here!"

Ted Scott's heart was stirred with pity as he watched the feverish excitement of the old prospector. He dreaded to think of the reaction if Wilson found that his hardly won treasure had vanished. The young aviator gritted his teeth at the thought that, if the nuggets were

gone, it would probably prove to be the fact that the scoundrelly Gales had stolen them.

They crossed the valley and began to ascend the slope on the further side. Here for the first time Andy's sense of direction seemed to be at fault.

What he had noted from the airplane was confirmed on close observation. There had been a landslide and one of considerable proportions, for the whole face of the slope had changed. Old trails had been obliterated and rocks and trees were piled in wild confusion.

Andy went about like a hound that had lost the trail and was nosing desperately to regain it. It was hard work climbing over the rocks and trees and searching among the heaps of débris, but, buoyed up by excitement, he seemed indefatigable.

The other members of the party began to lose hope as the search continued. It seemed as though they might hunt among those miles of wildly tumbled débris for years without coming upon the object of their search.

"I'm afraid the old boy's in for an awful disappointment," remarked Walter in a low voice to Ted.

"It may be," rejoined Ted. "But look! He seems to have found the trail!"

Andy's nostrils were dilating, his eyes blazing.

"I have it figgered out now," he shouted exultantly. "Come along."

He led the younger members of the party at a pace that they found hard to follow, to a great boulder that stood out at the right.

"Here it is!" he shouted, as he pointed to a rough scrawl on the rock. "See my name there—Andy Wilson? It's down at the side of that."

He fell on hands and knees and dug away at the dirt like a dog at a woodchuck's hole. In a few moments he had uncovered a yawning hole that extended under the rock. Into this he reached eagerly.

He withdrew his hand. His face was as white as chalk.

"They're gone!" he wailed, and he covered his face with his hands. "Those skunks has got 'em! The nuggets are gone!"

CHAPTER XIX

The Robbed Cache

The old prospector's grief was pitiful as the realization came upon him that his treasure had been stolen.

Blended with the sympathy felt by his companions was their own chagrin at finding that they had come all this distance on a fruitless errand.

"Isn't it possible that the nuggets have been swept down the slope by the landslide and we may find them yet?" asked Hapworth, hoping against hope. But even as he spoke he realized the futility of the suggestion, for a glance about showed that this part of the slope had been spared by the avalanche.

"No," moaned Andy, as he rocked from side to side in his agony of disappointment. "Things here are jest as they wuz. The nuggets have been stolen. Oh, if I caught sight of that Cornwall Foster, wouldn't I put a bullet in him!"

Ted knelt down at the old man's side and groped about in the cavity.

"Right enough," he murmured, after a minute of searching. "There isn't anything there —except this scrap of paper," and he glanced at a piece that was clinging to his hand.

He was about to throw it away disgustedly when something about it caught his attention.

"Why, this looks like a map!" he exclaimed. "By Jove, it is a map!"

Andy Wilson snatched it from his hand.

"The same map I gave that feller, Cornwall Foster, in the hospital!" he fairly shouted. "Here's dead proof where my nuggets have gone."

It was indeed unanswerable proof, and the three young men looked at each other with wrath blazing in their eyes.

"So the Gales got here first, after all!" exclaimed Ted Scott bitterly.

"The rascals didn't let any grass grow under their feet," growled Bill.

Their chagrin was beyond measure. It would have been bad enough if nature, in the form of the landslide, had carried the treasure away. But that these scoundrels should have gained it by working on the confidence of a simple-hearted old man was intolerable.

Ted Scott sprang to his feet.

"We've lost the first round!" he exclaimed.

"But the fight isn't over yet. To steal the nuggets is one thing, to get out of the territory with them is another. We may get them yet. If we don't, it won't be because we've lain down and acknowledged defeat. Scatter, you fellows," he addressed Walter and Bill, "and see if you can find any traces of their camp around here."

They spread out in the vicinity. In a few minutes Ted raised a shout and the others came running.

"Here's where they camped!" cried Ted, as he pointed to some cans scattered about a small space. "There's the mark left by their tent poles and here are the ashes from their fire."

He reached down and thrust his hand into the mass of ashes.

"Warm yet, by thunder!" he cried, straightening up jubilantly. "Why, that fire couldn't have been made later than this very morning. We'll get them yet."

With growing excitement they studied the marks of many feet about the encampment.

"Quite a lot of them," remarked Walter Hapworth. "There must be at least a half dozen in the party."

"We'll lick them if they're twice as many," replied Ted. "All I ask is a chance to come to grips with them."

"Same here," echoed Bill. "In the fighting-

mad condition I am now, I'd tackle a regiment."

They followed the trail until the footsteps were lost at the bank of a small stream that ran through the valley.

"Wonder if they've taken to the water," said Bill.

"We'll soon see," replied Ted, who had noted that a fallen tree spanned the stream a hundred yards above.

He crossed on this natural bridge and looked for footsteps on the further side.

"Nothing here," he declared, after a close scrutiny. "They've probably gone by water for a short distance, anyway, to throw possible pursuers off the trail. We'll ask Andy about this stream."

They hurried back to the old prospector, who still sat in heartbroken silence by the looted cache.

"Cheer up, Mr. Wilson," Ted called to him, as he drew near. "Those fellows can't be far away."

He narrated what they had found, and Andy took heart of hope. He sprang to his feet and gripped his rifle.

"Let's foller 'em!" he cried. "I'll stick to their trail day an' night."

"So will we," returned Ted. "But it's necessary first to find what way they've gone. I

want to know about that river. Does it lead to the Yukon?"

"No," replied Andy. "It meanders along fur a dozen miles or so an' then it kind o' peters out."

"Good!" replied Ted. "Then they'll have to take to land again. I was afraid they might get into the Yukon and we couldn't do anything to them there from the airplane. Now we've got to hustle and get back to the airplane as quickly as possible. I want to spot those fellows before night, if possible."

They stood not on the order of their going but went at once. They were flaming with excitement and made light of the difficulties in their way. The return journey to the plane was made in much quicker time than had been their trip to the robbed cache.

It was a work of time to trundle the plane, which they found undisturbed, out into the open where they would have sufficient space for a take-off. But many hands made light work and in a shorter time than they had thought possible the *Lightning Streak* was again in the air.

"Now you fellows keep your eyes glued to your glasses," Ted directed, as he took his seat at the controls. "I'm going to sweep around in wide circles that will gradually narrow until we've covered every yard within thirty miles. Don't miss a single thing that you see creeping

over the landscape, and let out a peep the instant you see it."

"They may see or hear the airplane before we see them an' take to cover," suggested Andy.

"I don't think so," replied Ted. "In the first place, they haven't the slighest idea we're after them. They think you're still lying in the Denver hospital. The Government is using a lot of airplanes now in Alaska, flying over and mapping the territory; so if they notice the plane at all, they'll think it's one of them."

"But what a waking it will be when they come out of their trance!" exclaimed Bill joyfully.

"Trance is right," observed Ted. "But there may be some pretty lively doings when they come out of it, and we want to keep our rifles ready."

"Right you are," agreed Hapworth.

CHAPTER XX

On the Scout

For a long time Ted Scott kept the *Lightning Streak* circling about without result.

The party saw many moving things on the snowy landscape, but they were not what they wanted. Once in a while they sighted a herd of caribou or of moose. Twice they caught sight of small Indian villages with children playing about and the squaws going about their work. Once they glimpsed two kodiak bears lumbering through the scrub.

"If we had nothing else to do we might take a shot at those fellows and get some fresh bear meat," remarked Bill.

Walter Hapworth shrugged his shoulders.

"I haven't lost any bears," he said. "If I had, I'd be perfectly satisfied to have them remain lost. My arm's still sore from the claws of that fellow."

From time to time Ted Scott consulted the clock on the instrument board. It was getting late in the afternoon, and he was intensely anx-

ious to sight his quarry before the night set in. As the time passed without result, he almost came to the conviction that he would have to seek a landing for the night. Then Bill gave an excited exclamation.

"There's a bunch of fellows down there," he said, pointing a little to the right. "Get your glasses on them, all of you, and tell me what you think of them."

All eyes were turned in that direction and hearts leaped as the aviators saw a group of men toiling up a hillside.

"Six of them in all," Ted counted. "They look pretty well tuckered out. See how slowly they're moving."

"Either they've come a long way or they're carrying a pretty heavy load, perhaps both," commented Hapworth.

"It's my nuggets that's makin' 'em tired," snapped Andy Wilson, as he fondled his rifle.

"If that's the trouble, we'll try to relieve them of their load," replied Ted, as he put down his glasses and devoted himself to the controls. "Do they seem to be paying any attention to the plane?"

"Not to any extent," replied Hapworth. "They've glanced up at it carelessly; but they don't seem to be showing signs of alarm."

"Good!" said Ted. "Now I'm going to go down closer, and you fellows see if you can

recognize any of the bunch. It would be rather awkward if we should attack the wrong party. Walter, you know Brewster Gale as well as I do. When we get closer, see if you can make him out."

He shot down to a lower altitude until he was flying only a few hundred feet above the toiling party.

"By jove, I've spotted him!" exclaimed Walter Hapworth after a prolonged scrutiny. "That's Brewster Gale to a dead certainty. I know him by his face, his walk, his bearing. Remember that pompous swagger of his? Well, there it is to the life."

"How about Greg and Duck?" queried Ted. "Are they there, too?"

"I'm not quite so sure of them," replied Hapworth. "But that may be because they've grown beards as a disguise since they escaped from prison. Still, there are a couple of fellows there that resemble them in size and build. The other three are strangers. Probably some toughs that Gale picked up to help him in his dirty work."

"All armed, I suppose," remarked Ted.

"Every one of them carries a rifle," was the reply. "I can see some exciting times ahead."

"Four against six is some odds," observed Ted. "But we have the advantage of knowing who they are while they probably have no

suspicion that we're after them. At least, I hope they haven't. This is the time to set our brains to working."

He turned to Andy Wilson.

"Do you know where this trail leads to that they're following?" he asked.

Andy studied the landscape a while before replying.

"Yes," he answered. "There's a good piece of mountain climbing yet ahead of them, an' by the time they get to the top I reckon they'll be tired enough to call it a day an' go into camp."

"Any woodland at the top of the hill?" asked Ted Scott.

"Patches here an' there," replied Andy. "But if it's landin' you're thinkin' of, Ted, there's a plateau about a mile further on from where they'll probably camp that'll be smooth enough fur you to come down on safely."

"Good! That's what I had in mind," replied Ted. "Now I'll tell you, boys, what I plan to do. I'm going to shoot ahead of the path those fellows are following until I get out of their sight. Then I'm going to come down on this plateau that Andy's been telling me about and hide the plane, as well as ourselves."

"And then?" asked Bill.

"What follows will depend largely on circumstances," replied Ted. "I think that by

the time those fellows get up to the top over that long trail it will be night, and they'll be glad enough to go into camp. A little later on they'll probably have a surprise party."

"But suppose they don't camp?" suggested Hapworth. "They may be so desperately anxious to get out of the country that after a short rest and a meal they'll determine to make a night march of it. In that case, they'll run right into our own stopping place, if we're only a mile or so ahead of them."

"If they do, we'll ambush them," affirmed Ted. "In the dark they won't know how many we are, and the chances are they'll put up their hands when we tell them we have the drop on them."

"I ain't so sure of that," put in Andy. "Them nuggets are worth fightin' fur, an' it may come to actual shootin'."

"If it does, then we'll shoot it out with them," returned Ted. "Though I don't want any bloodshed, if we can avoid it."

"If it comes to that, all I ask is that you leave Brewster Gale to me," said Andy grimly. "That feller is my meat."

"Fair enough," conceded Ted. "But if we have to shoot, try to disable rather than kill. But I have a hunch they'll go into camp when they get to the top of the mountain. In that case, we may accomplish our end by strategy."

"How?" asked Bill.

"That must be determined later on," replied Ted. "If they set sentries, we may steal upon them and overpower them. If they don't, we may surprise them while they're asleep. But here goes now to get out of sight."

He threw the plane almost into full throttle and the *Lightning Streak* shot over the heads of the toiling party and disappeared beyond the brow of the mountain.

As soon as he thought it time for that maneuver, Ted described a wide circle at a low altitude and sought a suitable place for landing.

He found it without much difficulty on the plateau that had been described by Andy. At the further edge of this was a fringe of trees, and in this, after the plane had come down, it was trundled and thoroughly concealed from prying eyes by branches and underbrush.

"It'll be a full hour before those fellows reach the top of the mountain," said Ted. "Now's the time for us to break out some food. Then we'll take shelter behind some of the boulders with which this place is strewn and wait for developments."

They brought out food and made a hearty, if hasty, meal, which lacked only hot coffee to be thoroughly satisfying. But under the circumstances a fire was out of the question.

After they had finished, they looked to their

rifles and saw that they had an ample supply of cartridges.

"What are those?" asked Bill curiously, as Ted pulled out a small bag from the rear of the fuselage.

"Just a little present I brought along for our friends in case we came across them," answered Ted, grinning. He opened the bag and dumped out a half dozen pairs of handcuffs!

An exclamation of surprise came from the lips of his companions.

"You see," explained Ted, "to nab those scoundrels is one thing; to make them harmless after they've been nabbed is another. The chief of police of Denver is a good friend of mine, and when I hinted that I might need some of these bracelets he came across without question."

"Mighty clever, Ted," commented Hapworth, as he examined the handcuffs. "These things would make cooing doves out of roaring lions. Let's hope we get the chance to use them."

CHAPTER XXI

A Dangerous Errand

"Well, now, let's take up our positions," said Ted Scott, having put aside the handcuffs. "Walter, suppose you and Andy get behind those boulders," indicating two not far apart on the right side of the trail. "Bill and I will take these two on the left. Keep well out of sight, for everything depends on surprise. When I give the word, spring up and cover them. But don't shoot unless or until I say so."

For about twenty minutes they maintained their positions and then Bill gave vent to an exclamation.

"There they come over the top of the hill!" he cried.

Through crevices in the rocks the watchers trained their powerful glasses on the summit. There, silhouetted against the sky, they saw the six figures one by one reach the brow of the mountain. Pulses quickened and nerves grew tense. Would the men come on or would they pitch camp?

The watchers were not left long in doubt. The heavy bags were cast aside and the men threw themselves down on the ground, utterly spent by the long climb.

For nearly half an hour they lay there. Then gradually first one and then another got to his feet and moved about, gathering brushwood. In a few minutes a roaring fire sprang up. Evidently they were preparing a meal.

"No more travelin' fur them skunks to-night," muttered Andy. "They're clean tuckered out—carryin' my gold," he finished bitterly.

"Looks as though you were right," agreed Ted, watching the newcomers warily. "Guess they're done for to-day. Pity if we have to disturb their sleep later on," he added, with a grin. "Still, we're not going to take anything for granted. They may feel refreshed after supper and make another hack at the trail. We'll stay right here for a little while."

In a short time night had settled down. All the watchers could see from where they were was the fire, obscured momentarily at times by dark figures passing in front of it.

Ample time had passed since supper, and there was no sign that the march of the rascals would be resumed.

Still, to make assurance doubly sure, Ted Scott waited another hour. Then, when belief

had become conviction, the young aviator rose and stretched himself.

"They've gone in camp for the night, sure enough," he remarked. "I'm going to make them a visit."

"Not alone?" protested Hapworth.

"We'll go with you!" exclaimed Bill and Andy in unison.

The young aviator shook his head.

"No, not just yet," he said. "This is only a little scouting trip, and one is less likely to be seen than two or more. I want to get the layout of the camp and see if I can gather anything of their plans."

"But suppose they should spot you?" objected Hapworth. "You'd have no chance against six of them."

"No," admitted Ted. "But I'll be in the shadows and the chances are all against their catching sight of me. At the worst, I've got a good pair of legs."

"There's no runner so fast but what a bullet is faster," warned Andy.

"At least, let us go part way with you so that we'll be nearer in case of need," urged Bill.

"No," replied Ted. "This position is too strong to be abandoned. I'll compromise this far. If you hear any shots, of course you'll all come running. Or if I'm not back in a couple of hours you'll know that I'm in trouble and

you'll do what you think best to get me out of it. I'll promise you that I'll be careful, and you don't need to worry."

Reluctantly the others let Ted go, and in a moment his figure had vanished in the darkness.

For the first half mile he proceeded rapidly, though with great caution, on the alert for every sight and sound. Then he slowed his pace, taking shelter behind every bush or rock he came across and moving with all the stealth of a panther stalking his prey.

When within three hundred yards of the camp he dropped to hands and knees and wormed his way in the direction of the fire.

As he drew nearer to the zone of light, he was able to get a clear view of the campers.

He counted them. Six! Then they had not posted sentries!

This was reassuring in more ways than one. He could move about more freely without the fear of stumbling over a sentinel. It showed him, too, that they were off their guard, not fearing pursuit. The sight of the airplane that day had evidently given them no apprehension.

Their feeling of security was evidenced also by the fact that their rifles were stacked against a tree at the further edge of the camp. Had they been anticipating attack, the weapons

would undoubtedly have been within reach of their hands.

Three of the men were gathered in a group and evidently carousing, as Ted could see a bottle passing from hand to hand.

None of these faces, of which Ted could catch a glimpse from time to time, were familiar to him. They were not particularly vicious faces, but rough and reckless, belonging to the kind of men who would lend themselves to any venture that promised profit and not ask too many questions.

The remaining three were sitting some distance apart from the others at the foot of a tree, engaged in earnest conversation.

As silently as an Indian, Ted Scott worked his way to a spot where he could catch sight of their faces. His heart gave a leap as he recognized in the central figure of the three the selfish, heavy-jowled face of Brewster Gale!

The identification from the airplane, then, had been correct. The flyers had not been following a wrong trail.

There before him was the bitterest enemy Ted Scott had on earth. With him were two other enemies, quite as malevolent, but not as dangerous, because they lacked their father's brains—Greg and Duck Gale!

Behind the tree where the trio were sitting was a heavy growth of brushwood. It was out-

side the light thrown by the fire, yet near enough for one lying behind it to hear the conversation that was going on between the three. Toward this the young airman crept with consummate caution, taking care that not a rustling leaf nor cracking twig should betray his presence.

He had no delusions as to what would happen should he be pounced upon and captured. He would get short shrift from these desperate men. A bullet would be the most merciful death he could expect.

He reached the heavy brush behind the tree and lay flat on the ground, his hand grasping his rifle. From that position he could no longer see the three, but he could hear distinctly what they were saying.

The first thing the listener heard was his own name—Ted Scott!

CHAPTER XXII

Scoundrels in Council

"Ted Scott!" roared Brewster Gale. "Don't you worry about him. He's going to get his and get it plenty before I'm through with him. I'll get even with him, if it's the last thing I do on earth."

"He's always been a hoodoo for us," muttered Greg.

"He'd have got something of what's coming to him already," growled the elder Gale, "if you boobs hadn't made such a failure of that fire at the Bromville House. We might have killed three birds with one stone if you fellows had been worth your salt."

"We did the best we could," Duck excused himself.

"Your best didn't amount to much," snapped his father. "But I might have expected it. That fellow has always been able to tie you up in knots."

"I don't see any medals on you, if it comes to that," snarled Greg, stung by the contempt

in his father's tone. "You've tried to down him and failed. He's balked you at every turn."

"That was simply his infernal luck," retorted his father.

"That' a good alibi," sneered Duck.

"Well, well," said the elder Gale, in a more placating tone, "there's no use of our quarreling. The luck has turned now and turned with a vengeance. With plenty of money at our command, it will be strange if we can't find some way of getting full revenge on Ted Scott."

"There are lots of gangsters who would do the job for a few hundred dollars," suggested Greg.

"Oh, there are many ways," rejoined Brewster Gale. "But we'll have plenty of time to think them over. The thing we've got to concentrate on now is getting these nuggets safe back to the States."

"We've made a pretty good start on it now," remarked Duck. "We ought to reach the Yukon to-morrow. After that it will be comparatively easy."

"Everything's worked to a charm so far," observed Greg complacently.

"Couldn't have been better," agreed his father. "There's just one thing that's worrying me."

"What's that?" queried Greg.

"The loss of the map," replied Brewster Gale. "I can't think what's become of it. I've searched in all my pockets and in all the bags and can't find a trace of it."

"What do you care for the map, now that you've got the nuggets?" asked Duck.

"I care for it a lot," replied his father. "If you had a grain of sense in your noddle, you'd know why. Suppose Wilson should later on organize an expedition to come after his buried gold? Suppose he should find that map lying somewhere in the vicinity of the cache? He'd recognize it as the one he traced for me in the Denver hospital, wouldn't he? He'd know at once that I was the one who had got his gold. Whereas, if he didn't find the map, he wouldn't know but what Indians or wandering prospectors had stumbled on the cache and looted it. He might suspect me, but he wouldn't have a particle of proof."

"I suppose that's so, but I wouldn't let it worry me much," replied Greg. "The map will blow away or be buried in snow. There isn't one chance in a thousand it will ever be found. For that matter, the chances are that Wilson will never come after the gold. He hasn't any money or any friends and he couldn't find funds to finance the party."

"Anyway, he may be dead by this time," put in Duck hopefully.

Ted indulged in a silent chuckle as he thought of the very live Andy Wilson not more than a mile away.

"I don't know," said Brewster Gale doubtfully. "I hardly think Eklund would go that far, though I gave him a hint that I wouldn't weep any bitter tears if Wilson cashed in his checks. Shouldn't wonder, though, if Eklund were still keeping him on his back in the hospital bed."

"That's another expense we've got to reckon with," observed Greg. "You'll have to fork over a lot to Eklund in addition to what you've already given him."

"I wouldn't give him another cent," growled Duck. "Why should you? He's as deep in the mud as we are in the mire. He wouldn't dare squeal. If he did he'd be giving himself away."

"All the same," declared Brewster Gale, "it'll be well to keep him good-natured. And what little we give him will hardly make a dent in those bags over there," and he pointed exultingly to the heavy bags that contained the nuggets.

"How much do you think the stuff amounts to?" asked Greg.

"How do I know?" replied his father. "Hundreds of thousands, anyway. Enough to keep us riding high and sitting pretty for the rest of our lives."

"Providing the Janvier people don't nab us," said Greg, with an accent of pessimism.

"They've almost forgotten that we existed," replied the elder Gale. "No doubt they've called off the active hunt long ago. Our names are on the books and that's about all."

"All the same," put in Duck, "I shan't get in one good night's sleep until we're on the other side of the Atlantic."

"Same here," echoed Greg.

"That's just where we'll be a few weeks or months from now," promised the elder Gale. "Let me turn all this stuff into cash and do one more thing and I'll say good-by to this continent forever."

"And that one more thing?" queried Greg.

"You ought to know," retorted his father. "Vengeance on Ted Scott! Until I have that I'll never rest. There isn't room in the world for him and me."

"Don't you think," said Greg, changing the subject and glancing uneasily at the carousing trio on the other side of the camp, "that those fellows are having too much to drink? They may turn ugly."

"Oh, I don't know," said his father care-

lessly. "More likely they'll turn stupid. They'd certainly be ugly if we tried to interfere with them. Let them alone. They have hard heads and they'll be ready for work in the morning. And that reminds me that we, too, had better be getting what sleep we can. We've got a long tramp ahead of us to-morrow."

The three Gales rose to their feet, yawning, and went over to where they had left their blankets.

This was Ted Scott's opportunity, and he crawled away in the darkness on hands and knees until he had reached a safe distance from the camp. Then he rose to his feet and put on speed, and in a few minutes was at the rocks where his comrades were anxiously waiting for him.

Their relief and delight were unbounded as they gathered around him.

"What luck, old boy?" asked Walter Hapworth.

"The best," replied Ted. "We've got those fellows dead to rights. And we'll cop the whole gang!"

CHAPTER XXIII

The Midnight Attack

"That's mighty good hearing," replied Bill Twombley to Ted Scott's confident declaration that the capture of the Gales was imminent. "What makes you so sure? Give us the whole story."

Ted Scott described to his eager listeners in detail the layout of the camp and the conversation he had overheard between Brewster Gale and his sons.

"They feel perfectly secure," he said. "They don't think there's an enemy within a thousand miles. The airplane this afternoon didn't give them the slightest quiver."

"Haven't they posted any sentries?" asked Hapworth.

"They hadn't when I came away, and there was nothing said about them in the conversation of the Gales," replied Ted. "It's dead certain that those three were planning to go to sleep. And if any of the other bunch stands

guard, he'll be so heavy from drink that he can't keep awake long."

"Well, now just what do you plan to do?" asked Bill.

"This," replied Ted. "We'll wait here for about two hours until we're certain that the crowd are in their first sleep. Then we'll creep up on them, keeping a possible sentry in mind, though I don't think there'll be any.

"The first thing we'll do, if they're all asleep when we reach the camp, will be to remove the rifles. No doubt, some of the gang have revolvers and knives in their clothes. But those won't count much against leveled rifles. Besides, I hope to put the rascals in a position where they can't draw them, even if they try to."

"How?" asked Bill.

"That's where the handcuffs come in," replied Ted. "And we'll take along a coil of rope for good measure. Those fellows will be sleeping to beat the band because of the hard day's traveling, and in addition three of them at least will be sodden with drink. It would take something like an earthquake to wake them.

"Now the plan of attack will be something like this. We'll suppose that we've taken their rifles away. Andy will stand guard with leveled gun to quell any who may get too obstreperous.

You, Walter and Bill, and I will each choose one of the three half-drunken fellows. It ought to be easy to pull their hands together and snap the handcuffs on their wrists before they know what's happening. Then we'll leave them to Andy's care and give the Gales a dose of the same medicine."

"That'll be the hardest part," remarked Hapworth. "The struggle with the first three and their shouts will waken the Gales."

"Probably," admitted Ted. "But we'll have the advantage of the surprise and we'll be more than a match for them. Now that, roughly, is the plan of campaign. If circumstances make it necessary to vary from that, we'll have to do what seems best on the spur of the moment. You carry the handcuffs, Walter, and squeeze the mouth of the bag to keep them from jingling. You get the coil of rope from the plane, Bill. I imagine it will come in handy before the night is over."

Bill was off like a shot on the errand and in a few moments returned with the rope.

"All ready?" asked Ted.

"Yes," came the reply in chorus.

"Let's go then," said Ted. "Remember, fellows, as I said before, there's to be no shooting except as a last resort. Even then shoot low to wound but not to kill. And move quietly, for the least noise may upset all our plans. If

we come across a sentry, leave me to deal with him."

With the utmost caution they moved off in Indian file, Ted Scott in the lead, Bill Twombley and Walter Hapworth following in order and Andy Wilson bringing up the rear.

As they neared the camp they could see that the fire had died down and was scarcely more than a smoldering heap of embers.

As silently as shadows they stole along until within a few hundred yards of the camp. There Ted halted his followers.

"Stay here," he whispered, "while I creep ahead to see if there is a sentry posted. If there is, he'll be less likely to hear one than four. I'll manage him if I can without noise. But if an alarm is raised come running."

The young aviator vanished into the darkness. On hands and knees he wormed his way nearly to the edge of the camp. But he encountered no one and in a few minutes he was back with his companions.

"It's all right," he whispered. "Luck is on our side. Come along, but come like ghosts. I'll post you when we get there. But don't make a move until I've removed their rifles out of their reach."

They reached the camp, and Ted Scott silently stationed his companions at the spots he thought best suited for his purpose. Then

he stole over to the tree against which the rifles of the gang were leaning and, two by two, carried the weapons into the woods.

The light thrown by the waning fire was dim, but cast enough of a dull glow about the place to reveal the sprawling figures of the sleepers in groups of three on opposite sides of the clearing. The Gale group was on the farther side.

By signs Ted indicated to Bill and Hapworth the men of the nearer trio that they were to tackle, he himself taking the third. Andy stood with grimly leveled rifle, ready to shoot if need demanded.

Ted was about to lift his hand as a signal for the attack when one of the gang stirred, stretched himself and rose to a sitting position.

Instantly the unseen watchers hidden behind trees froze into immobility.

The man looked around in a dazed, sodden way. His eye caught sight of the bottle. He lifted it to his lips and tilted it, but it was empty. With a growl of disappointment he hurled it away from him and lay down again.

Not until his loud snoring told that he was sound asleep again did the watchers move from their strained positions.

Ted lifted his hand.

As swiftly and softly as cats, Ted, Bill, and Walter stole to the sides of their respective

quarries. Quite as swiftly, they brought the hands of the sleepers together and snapped the handcuffs on their wrists.

A chorus of wild yells of alarm arose from the rudely awakened victims of the sudden onslaught, and they tried to struggle to their feet. But Andy was on them in an instant.

"Lie still there, you varmints!" he yelled, emphasizing his command with pokes from the muzzle of his weapon that toppled them over on their backs. "The first one of you that tries to git up gits a bullet in his dog-goned hide!"

His blazing eyes and that ominous black rifle muzzle commanded instant obedience. They were beaten and they knew it.

At the loud shouts the Gales awoke and sprang to their feet. But before they could fairly get on their legs the attackers were on them like thunderbolts.

Down they went in a struggling, fighting, tumbling mass.

Ted had tackled Greg, the most formidable of the trio, Bill had singled out Duck, while Walter was at grips with the elder Gale.

The contest was fierce but brief. Duck drew a knife, but before he could use it, Bill had swung the handcuffs on his head and knocked him insensible. Greg, too, had reached for his belt, but Ted threw his legs about his opponent's arms and body in a scissors hold, while

his sinewy fingers sank into Greg's throat until the latter sagged and lay limp.

It was the work of an instant to handcuff both.

Walter Hapworth had a harder task. Brewster Gale fought with the fury of desperation. He butted his head into Hapworth's chin, dazing the latter for a moment and causing him to relax his hold. Like a flash Gale shook himself loose, leaped to his feet and started for the surrounding woods.

But Ted Scott was too quick for the rascal and threw himself directly in his path.

With a snarl, Brewster Gale pulled his revolver from his belt and fired!

CHAPTER XXIV

Captured

The bullet from Brewster Gale's revolver whizzed close to the right ear of Ted Scott who had sensed Gale's action and dodged just in the nick of time.

Before the rascal could fire again, Ted's fist shot out and crashed into Gale's jaw.

The man went down as though stricken by an axe. In an instant Ted was down on top of him and held him fast, just as Bill came up with a pair of handcuffs and snapped them on Gale's wrists.

Ted rose, panting but jubilant, to his feet. The fight was over. The enemy had been taken and without the shedding of blood, except that which came from the noses of Greg and Duck Gale where they had come in contact with the fists of Ted and Bill.

Andy was still keeping vigilant guard over the three who had been first shackled. Walter picked up a rifle and kept the Gales under its muzzle while Bill and Ted dragged the discom-

fited scoundrels to one side and set them up with their backs against trees.

Duck Gale had not yet come back to consciousness, but a few pans of water thrown in his face brought him to the possession of his senses.

The rascals were full of rage and disappointment, and a constant stream of epithets and maledictions, directed at the party in general and at Ted Scott in particular, issued from their lips.

"Shall I gag the fellows?" asked Bill.

"Not at all," replied Ted. "They must have some vent or they'd burst."

"Well, now that we've got these birds, what are we going to do with them?" asked Walter Hapworth.

"That will bear some thinking over," admitted Ted. "Let's start this fire up again, so that we can see better what we're doing. I haven't had a real good look at these Janvier jailbirds yet."

Fresh objurgations broke from the Gales at the mention of the prison, but Ted paid no attention to them until the rejuvenated fire was blazing strongly, making a clearing as bright as day.

"Now we come back to Walter's question," said Ted. "What are we going to do with these birds?"

"The whole lot o' them ought to be shot," averred Andy. "That's what we used to do in the old days when we ketched the varmints red-handed. If trees an' ropes wuz handy, we hung 'em. If they wuzn't, bullets would do the trick."

"Now hold your horses a minute, old-timer," put in one of Gale's assistants. "Ain't you goin' a bit too strong? What have me an' my two mates been doin', anyway?"

"You've been helpin' these skunks here rob me of my gold," snapped the irate Andy. "That's what you've been doin' an' you can't deny it."

"How'd we know it was yours?" demanded the first speaker. "The boss here," indicating Brewster Gale with a motion of his shackled hands, "told us it was his. Said it had been left to him by an old prospector that he had grubstaked and who gave it to him when he was dyin' with a map that told him where to find it."

"That's right," said a second of the trio. "That's just what he said. Co'se we didn't know the rights of it, and we had to take him at his word."

The third grunted and nodded his head in affirmation.

Andy's burning eyes sought out Brewster Gale.

"You tarnal skunk!" he blazed out, as he strode over to the rascal. "So I gave you that map when I wuz dyin', did I, an' gave it to you with my blessin'? You cheat! You liar! Comin' to me when I wuz weak an' sick an' wheedlin' the map out o' me! Bribin' the doctor to keep me on my back until you could git away with the loot! Talk about shootin'! Shootin's too good fur you! Say," he pleaded, turning to Ted, "whatever we do with the others, let's put a bullet in this dog, anyway. He deserves it."

Ted Scott shook his head.

"No, Andy," he said. "He's a dirty rat, all right; but we're not going to kill him. We'll turn him over to the law and let that deal with him. Don't worry. He'll get all that's coming to him. He'll wear stripes and do the lockstep for the rest of his life."

"Loose his hands, give him a gun an' let him an' me shoot it out man to man," implored Andy, who gave up his idea of personal satisfaction with difficulty.

But Ted Scott was adamant.

"Nothing doing, Andy," he stated with firmness. "As for these three," he went on, indicating Gale's assistants, "it seems to me that they haven't done anything especially wrong. They had no way of knowing what rascality Gale was up to. Work was offered to them and

they took it. I vote that we let them go. What do you say, fellows?"

There was hearty assent from Bill and Walter and a somewhat more grudging acquiescence from Andy.

"You sure are white, boss," said one of the three gratefully, and his mates nodded in agreement.

"You'll have to do a little work before you go," said Ted. "Those bags have got to be toted over to the airplane."

"Airplane!" burst from Brewster Gale's lips. "So that was your plane we saw this afternoon, you—you—you—" the epithets stuck in his throat.

"The same," grinned Ted.

"Oh, what fools we were!" groaned Greg.

Duck said nothing but spat viciously.

"Fools, sure enough," agreed Ted pleasantly. "Fools to lose that map which told us who had robbed the cache. Fools not to cover the ashes with snow, so that their warmth wouldn't tell us that you were close at hand. Fools not to set sentries, so that we couldn't come on you unawares. But then, all criminals are fools. Else they wouldn't be criminals."

Brewster Gale glared at Ted Scott with eyes in which was all the venom of a rattlesnake.

"Didn't know that I was listening to your talk a few hours ago, did you?" went on Ted.

"Oh, yes, I heard all that you were going to do to Ted Scott. I heard you berating Greg and Duck because they hadn't burned Eben and Charity and me in our beds. I heard you gloating over the way you'd fooled Andy Wilson. I heard all about that nice trip to Europe, where, after you had disposed of me, you were going to live high on the stolen gold. You'll never see Europe, Brewster Gale!"

He turned again to the three assistants.

"As I was saying when this gentleman interrupted me," he went on, "you'll help us get the bags to the plane. Then we'll see that you have grub enough to get back to the States, a little money to carry you along and turn you loose. Take off their handcuffs, Bill," he added, "and start them toting those bags. Andy will keep them covered with his rifle. And remember," he warned the men, as, freed from their bonds, they struggled to their feet, "Andy's a bit peevish and he's mighty quick on the trigger!"

CHAPTER XXV

In the Grip of the Law

There was a sheepish grin on the part of the men at Ted Scott's warning, but they offered no protest and set to work readily enough to transport the bags of nuggets to the airplane.

No doubt they felt chagrin at losing the share of the loot that Brewster Gale had probably promised them. But they were thankful enough to have escaped with their lives in that wild country, where their killing would probably never be known, and they made the best of what doubtless appeared to them as a bad job.

Under the watchful guardianship of Andy and Bill, who held their rifles ready for use at the first sign of revolt, they toiled several times over the mile stretch that intervened between the camp and the plane.

It was a matter of hours before the work was completed, and the first rays of light were coming over the eastern hills by the time the last bag had been stowed away.

Ted and Hapworth in the meantime had kept guard over the Gales, sitting directly opposite the miscreants, their rifles in their hands.

The prisoners had relapsed into sullen and bitter silence, broken at last by Brewster Gale.

"What are you going to do with us?" he growled, glaring at Ted.

"Give you a nice airplane ride that won't cost you a cent," replied Ted. "You'll have some beautiful views of Alaskan scenery. After you get to the States, it won't be so good. We'll turn you over to the Denver police and they'll give you board and lodging for a while until the authorities for my State have arranged for extradition proceedings. After that, you'll take a little jaunt to the State Prison at Janvier. They've been pining for you a long while. They've missed you sadly, so much so that they've offered a reward of a good many thousands of dollars for your capture. That's what it is to be popular."

Gale broke out in a torrent of imprecations.

"Naughty, naughty!" reproved Ted. "Free speech is a good thing, but like all good things it may be carried to excess. Ah, here they come," as the rest of the party returned. "How about it, Bill? Everything snug and tidy?"

"Packed in to the queen's taste," replied Bill. "But we haven't much room left to stow

away these mugs in," looking with distaste at the prisoners.

"I suppose it will be a tight squeeze," replied Ted. "But probably these gentlemen won't mind. There's the old saying you know about being as thick as thieves. They'll have a bit more room when they get to their cells."

He turned to the three assistants.

"I see that Bill has already provided you with grub," he said, as he looked at the pouch that one of them carried. "You're not far from the Yukon now, and you'll be able to flag one of the boats that will carry you down. Sorry I can't let you have your rifles, but I don't think it's advisable under the circumstances. After we've left you can come back and get them, if you like. You'll find them in the woods near by."

He took some bills from his pocket and handed them to the men.

"These may help in a pinch," he said. "Now turn about face and go down that hill. Don't turn around, or it may be unhealthy. We'll watch you till you're out of sight."

They did as directed, and those left behind watched until their figures vanished in the distance.

"That's enough," pronounced Ted, rising. "Even if they wanted to, which I don't think

they do, they couldn't get back in time to interfere with us. Stand up now and march," he ordered the prisoners.

Ragingly, they did as ordered.

"Step out in front," commanded Ted, "and keep going until you're told to stop. We'll be right behind you and the first sign of funny business will mean a bullet. Quick now! Get going."

There was no alternative but to obey, and the three ex-convicts marched toward the plane.

"Aren't you going to take these handcuffs off?" demanded Brewster Gale, glowering at Ted, when they stopped beside the *Lightning Streak.*

"I would if I were crazy," replied Ted. "No, Brewster Gale, you're going to wear those bracelets until I hand you over to the Denver police. And you're going to wear more than that. Lie down on the ground, the three of you."

"What for?" demanded Gale truculently.

"Because you're told to, that's why," snapped Andy Wilson, emphasizing his remark by a poke in the ribs with his rifle. "'Tain't for skunks like you to ask questions. Lie down now or the next poke will be harder."

Muttering imprecations, they obeyed.

"Tie their feet and arms," Ted directed Bill and Hapworth. "They might crack our skulls

with those handcuffs if they were able to move about in the plane. We can't have any worry of that kind to bother us while we're flying."

The men were trussed securely and lifted into the cabin of the plane.

"We'll give you plenty of food and everything else you need," said Ted, as he and the rest adjusted their helmets and prepared for the flight. "We don't wish to make you any more uncomfortable than we have to. But we're going to take no chances, and one of us will be watching you like a hawk every minute of the time, day and night, until we land in Denver. The first false move will be your last. Get me?"

They "got him." The game was up and they knew it. But if looks could kill, Ted Scott would have dropped dead on the spot.

The aviators trundled the plane out on the rocky plateau until they had abundant room for their take-off. Then the propeller whirled, the engines roared, and the *Lightning Streak* darted upward into the skies.

Ted Scott turned her nose toward the States, and the plane shot through the air as though she knew she were going home.

Not for one moment did vigilance relax during that long journey. There was never an instant when the prisoners were not under guard by one or the other of their captors. Too much

was at stake—not only the treasure, but their very lives—to permit any relaxation of watchfulness.

Andy Wilson was in the seventh heaven of delight. The old prospector was renewing his youth. All fear of poverty in his old age had been removed. He was rich, far beyond whatever he might need for the rest of his life.

"That gold is goin' to be divided into four equal parts, one fur each of us," he declared.

They all exclaimed against such generosity.

"Nothing of the kind," declared Ted. "You can pay the expenses of the expedition, if you want to, but that's all. We've had our pay in the excitement of the adventure. It's satisfaction enough for me to land these rascals in jail."

"Who's got the say about this?" demanded Andy. "It's my gold, ain't it? I can do with it what I like, can't I? Don't you fellers go gittin' me r'iled now. I've got far more than I'll ever need. What you want me to do with it, leave it to an asylum fur stray cats?"

They laughed.

"I can't forgit," Andy went on, his voice trembling, "that if it hadn't been fur you fellers I'd never have got a cent of this. You left your own business an' came to me when I wuz down an' out, a broken old wreck, an'

cheered me up an' got me on my feet an' came up here to risk your lives fur me. An' now you ain't goin' to let me share up with you, the one thing that would make me happier than anythin' else on earth!"

He wiped a tear from his faded eyes.

He was so genuinely broken up by their refusal, so desperately unhappy, that they had to agree to accept ten thousand dollars each of the treasure. Andy still grumbled at the smallness of the amount, but they were adamant against going beyond that figure, and with his self-respect soothed in some measure, the old fellow relapsed into happy dreams of the future.

The weather on the return trip was all that could be desired, and long before he had thought possible, Ted Scott found himself hovering over the Denver airport.

The *Lightning Streak* came down to a perfect landing, and, leaving his companion to guard the prisoners, Ted Scott hurried to the telephone and called up police headquarters.

"Ted Scott speaking," he said, when he had got the ear of the chief. "Say, chief, do you remember those bracelets you lent me? I've brought them back, but three pairs of them are on the wrists of birds I picked up in Alaska. You remember the missing ex-convicts that escaped in the Janvier revolt? Those are the fel-

lows. Send a patrol wagon up to the airport, will you? Thanks, old man."

The chief was all agog at the news, and it was some time before Ted could hang up.

In a short time the patrol wagon came clattering up and the Gales, uttering wild maledictions against Ted, were bundled in and carried to jail to await the action of the Janvier authorities. Later they were taken back to serve out their terms, with additional penalties for the jail break. Ted got the reward, which he divided equally with his three comrades.

Ted and his companions repaired to a hotel, where they enjoyed the luxuries of baths and shaves and a change into fresh clothes. Then Ted, unaccompanied, set out for the hospital where he had first met Andy Wilson.

He was cordially received by Dr. Graves, the hospital head, of whom Ted immediately inquired about Dr. Eklund.

"He's gone," said Dr. Graves. "No one seems to know just where. His case was going to be brought up before the medical society with every prospect of a serious ending for him. He sold out his practice for a song, wound up his affairs, and left town hurriedly. Rumors are that he's gone abroad, but he's covered his tracks so well that nobody seems certain as to his whereabouts."

"Just as well, perhaps," pronounced Hap-

worth later, when Ted told him of the conversation with the hospital head. "He might have found it hard work to pin anything on him, guilty as we know him to be. He hasn't escaped without punishment. He's disgraced and a fugitive. And the plot fell through, anyway. Andy has his treasure."

Ted's first act, as always after the completion of a flight, had been to telegraph to Eben and Charity of his safety. He received in reply a message so full of delight and affection that his longing to return to them grew unbearable.

The next day, after a cordial parting with his friends, Walter Hapworth resumed his interrupted journey to the coast. Bill Twombley resumed his work with the Air Service, and Ted Scott and Andy Wilson were left alone.

The nuggets had been transferred to the mint for assay. It was found that the treasure was worth a little over ninety thousand dollars. Now that the excitement was over, Andy, though very happy, seemed to be pervaded with a vague restlessness. Ted guessed the cause.

"What are you going to do now, Andy?" Ted asked.

"I can't tell exactly," replied Andy, with a faint smile. "Seems as though I'd kind o' lost my bearin's. S'pose I'll settle down somewhere. I ain't got no kith or kin anywhere."

"I know what you're going to do," declared Ted. "You're going home with me. You and Eben will hit it off to a dot. You're two of a kind. You can chin together until you're black in the face. You can live at the hotel, or, if you like, you can get the little cottage that your brother James lived in, fix it over, and be as snug as a bug in a rug."

A vast delight made Andy Wilson's face radiant.

"Do you really mean it?" he faltered.

"Nothing else but," affirmed Ted Scott, grabbing his arm. "Clap on your hat and come along. The *Lightning Streak* is waiting. All aboard for Bromville!"

THE END

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